

HANDS *of* CLAY

Edgar Rice Beach

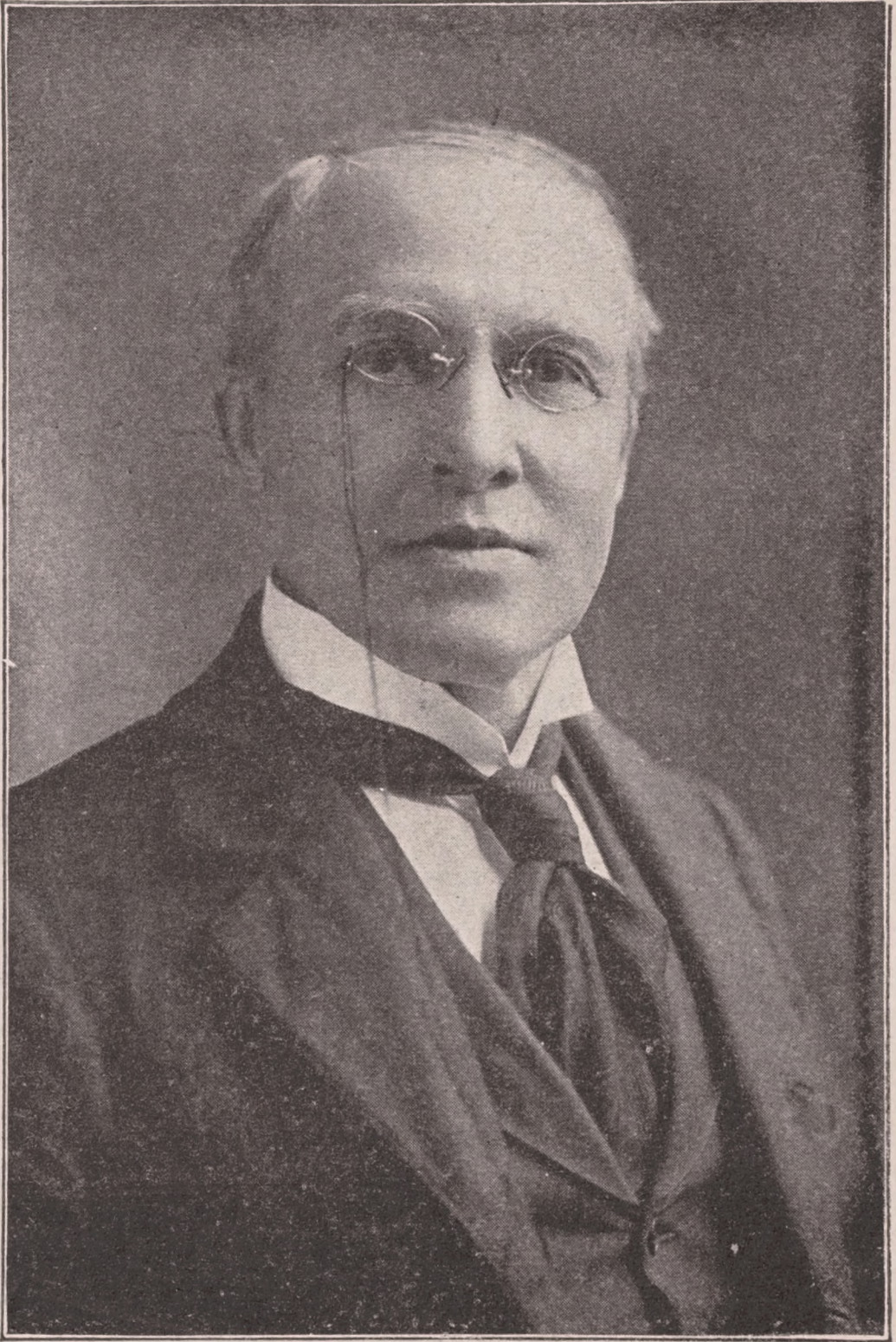


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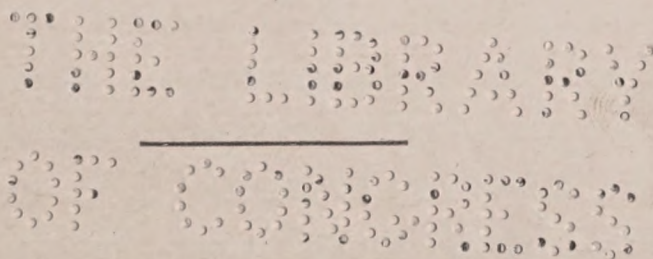
*Yours Sincerely,
Edgar Rice Beach*

Hands of Clay

A Great City's Half—
and the Other Half

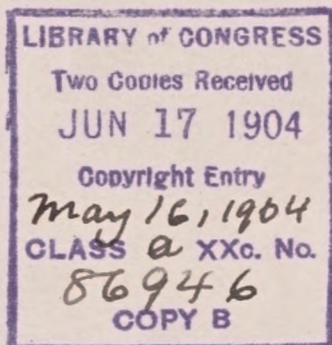
By
Edgar Rice Beach

AUTHOR OF
"JOSHUA HUMBLE"



St. Louis
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HANDS OF CLAY

A GREAT CITY'S HALF—AND THE OTHER HALF

TIME 1856-1866.

CHAPTER I.

THE GARDEN CITY.

A strange form arose from the ice-field on the lake, and floated over "The Garden City." Possibly an aeronaut had ventured aloft in a balloon from the eastern shore that clear, cold day, and from that dizzy height sat looking down on a beautiful scene.

Far to the north, west and south stretched a wonderful network of streets, crowded with people and vehicles, and through the shadowy, dim horizon came the railways, like arteries in the human system, winding in and concentrating at a given point. The river passing through the center of the city, a great trough filled to the brim with solid ice, under a deep bed of snow, held firmly at anchor hundreds of vessels whose ropes, masts and spars seemed interlaced. Huge elevators, treasuries of a continent, towered above the wharves, and on every hand great factories and foundries, from whose tall chimneys curled aloft in graceful wreaths black clouds of smoke. Lofty solid squares of stone, brick and iron, holding the wealth of the great city, and the massive public buildings and stately residences, with shapely roofs and gables, and the tall,

graceful church spires with gilded weather vanes, glittered in the wavering light of sunset.

Eastward, the blue, limpid waters of the lake rippled along the horizon, and seething, foaming waves came dancing shoreward, dashing in white sheets on the piers and breakwater, and far above and below the city, rolling high on the white, sandy shore. The lighthouse, like a giant in mortal conflict, battled with the waves far out in the lake, and great masses of ice were piled high against its storm-scarred sides and over the piers and breakwater.

It was neither a spirit form nor an air ship, but a dull, leaden bank of clouds that arose from the bosom of the lake and floated over Chicago that boisterous New Year's eve. Fine, damp snow fell from the black sky, sowing the earth with powdered cold, drifting in deep banks over street pavements, sifting through roofs and under doors, and the wind came from the lake in furious gusts, with loud trumpeting and mournful wailings.

Rudolph Merryfellow hurried eastward on Lake street, through the blinding storm, as the great bells of the city tolled midnight, but his progress was slow and toilsome. He struggled against the wind, slipped on icy crossings, tripped over loose boulders on the pavement, and condemned the negligence of the street commissioner in language far more forcible than elegant.

The railway train from the East was due a few minutes after midnight, and Merryfellow was endeavoring to reach the depot in advance of its arrival. As he ran, his huge feet plowed through the snow, sending it aloft in pearly clouds, and the wind buffeted him, but he

leaned forward against it and ran at his utmost speed. By street lamps, which flickered dimly through the darkness and storm, over street crossings which the wind had swept clean, exposing smooth, icy surfaces, through deep snow drifts and into pitfalls left uncovered by careless workmen, now dodging a lonely pedestrian, and again avoiding a passing vehicle, whose snow-blinded driver had allowed his team to trench upon the sidewalk; on, and onward, and he began to congratulate himself on his many narrow escapes from injury, and the progress he was making, when suddenly he tripped, fell forward at full length, and disappeared like a diver plunging from a springboard into deep water.

Five seconds later the snow parted, and gradually and in detail there appeared through and above the white surface a human hand and arm, head, shoulders, and Merryfellow arose to his feet. As he brushed his neck and face with one hand, he stooped down, and with the other felt around in search of that over which he had tripped and fallen.

"Something soft," he muttered as he knelt down and with both hands continued the search; "a sack of grain or sand—blazes how I plowed through the snow! Dratt it! I'll be too late if I poke around here," and he arose and started forward when his feet again touched the object of his search, and he reached down and drew from under the snow a brown duck sack. Holding it up in the light of the street lamp, he carefully examined it, squeezed it with both hands, and finally said, disappointedly, "a rag-picker's or sailor's bag, pshaw! I'm wasting time here while wife and baby are shivering in the cold depot."

Impatiently he threw the sack down on the pavement, and with such force that the string gave way, and out rolled several articles of coarse wearing apparel, crumpled newspapers, a memorandum book, and a large calf-skin wallet which opened as it fell, scattering its contents in the snow. He saw, even in the dim light of the street lamp, that the papers were valuable, and as he grasped them discovered that they were of parchment. He carefully replaced all of them in the wallet except one, which, without conscious motive, he put into the inside pocket of his great coat, and returning all the other articles to the sack, he found the string, secured the mouth, lifted the bag to his shoulder, and then went forward at a quick walk. The snow beat furiously in his face, and the wind twisted the sack around on his shoulder, but he kept steadily on and increased his speed until he again ran. Finally he passed an alley where the snow had drifted deep over the pavement, when a strong gust of wind whirled him around and he tripped and fell forward heavily. As he went down, his hold on the sack gave way, and it was thrown forward and buried in the soft, deep snow. As he arose, he observed where it had fallen, and, after a moment's reflection, during which he brushed his coat with his hands and stamped his feet impatiently, said: "good enough, out of the way there, close by the wall where nobody will find you to-night. Glad to be rid of you for the present, will attend to you in the morning. Dratt it! what was that I stumbled over?"

Stooping down, he felt around with both hands, but quickly straightened up and said, impatiently: "Only an old boot on a human foot, perhaps, but have no time

now to investigate." Then he glanced hastily around, observing the peculiarities of the locality, and added, "I shall easily find the place. That five-story building with mansard roof and iron shutters over the way, this alley and unfinished building—humph!" Thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his great coat, and drawing its long skirts closely around him, he again started forward and ran very fast, considering the strong wind and depth of snow, and a few minutes later he entered the door of the great union depot.

There stood the train, just arrived, the roofs and platforms of the coaches white with snow, passengers hurrying out burdened with baggage and parcels, hackmen and hotel porters vehemently soliciting patronage, and yet, amid the deafening noise and overwhelming confusion, he distinctly heard a familiar voice, and through the blinding dazzle of lights and the surging of a vast multitude he saw even at a distance a form and face very dear to him, and pressing his way swiftly through the crowd, he clasped in his arms his dear young wife. There was a smothered exclamation of joy as Rudolph bent caressingly over her, the sound of kissing lips, the murmur of loving words of greeting, and then he took from her arms a mysterious bundle which immediately began to squirm, snuff and sneeze, and finally broke forth in a plaintive wail:

"Ah!" said the little wife, caressingly, "the snow on your coat and beard falls into baby's face, let me cover him up please." Instantly Merryfellow shortened himself to meet the requirements of his little wife, young Merryfellow's face was covered with a white silk handkerchief delicately perfumed, his little plump

hands and feet tucked snugly in under his warm fur-lined cloak, and a few moments later they were dashing along in a cutter behind spirited horses toward their earthly paradise—"sweet home."

CHAPTER II.

RALPH SKINNER AND LITTLE JIM.

Ralph Skinner lived in the garret of a five story building on Lake Street. It was the most substantial and beautiful structure in that portion of the city. It had been constructed under his immediate supervision and strictly according to his designs. He was an architect by profession, but during the latter twenty years of his life had attended only to the construction of his own buildings, the one in which he lived being his last and the crowning effort and triumph of his life. He owned several other valuable buildings in the business portion of the city, and many tenement houses in the suburbs, and all were clear of incumbrances. His profession had never yielded him an income worthy of mention, and only by rigid economy, sharp practice bordering on dishonesty, yet a safe distance within the bounds of legitimate business transactions, had he been able to obtain possession of the property which he claimed and held in fee simple, in defiance of numerous claimants in equity. Every nail, stone, brick and board composing the building in which he lived represented a sigh, tear or curse, for the purchase money had been wrung, penny by penny, from the poor and needy.

Ralph Skinner was a frugal man, exceedingly careful in every business detail, and thoroughly methodical even in his domestic arrangements. For business purposes he occupied a small room in the fourth story which was very decently furnished, but the garret in

which he lived had originally been designed for a lumber room, a place in which to stow away old boxes, barrels, odds and ends of lumber, stray worn-out sacks, old paper, and every imaginable species of rubbish. It had never been plastered, was close up under the bare timbers of the roof, and of barely sufficient height for a man of ordinary stature to stand upright in the center. A partition had been constructed across an angle of the great room, inclosing a space about eighteen by twenty feet, including a dormer window toward the street, which, being very small, but dimly lighted the apartment even at mid-day.

The partition was of rough boards, with uneven edges not matched or battened, and the cold damp air rushed through the numerous openings in freezing currents.

The furniture of the apartment consisted of a small stove range, especially designed for use in warm weather, a kind of heat-proof apparatus, warranted to consume but little fuel and answer all the purposes of an ordinary kitchen-stove without throwing out any heat whatever. It sat close up under the eaves and had but one joint of pipe, which went straight into the brick chimney behind it. An ancient drop-leaf walnut table, hacked and marred, and one leaf gone, occupied a corner of the room, and above it, low down, was a small box nailed to the wall, having a door hung on leather hinges. It was used as a cupboard, and its mysterious contents can only be conjectured. It doubtless contained a meager supply of very coarse unpalatable food, a few broken dishes, and just the number of knives and forks required. One large arm-chair, whole and strong,

occupied a jag in the wall close by the heat-proof stove. That was the chair of state and never for one moment occupied except by Skinner. A low, hard, wooden stool, a large, iron-bound walnut chest, a weak, patched-up old bedstead, on which was an old linen tick filled with straw and covered by tattered woolen blankets, constituted the essentials of the apartment. They possessed the merit of being plain and cheap to the last degree, which was a source of constant satisfaction to Skinner. Simple, plain, unattractive and very cheap were the points fixed in his mind, as he overhauled a dozen or more second-hand furniture establishments when he purchased them.

Skinner was violently opposed to gormandizing. He maintained (and doubtless believed) that to eat one crumb after the cravings of hunger had been appeased, was morally a criminal act. Food, barely palatable, was all he required, even a trifling nauseating rendered it more desirable inasmuch as the stomach would protest against its unwholesome load, and less quantity would satisfy its demands. Solid, substantial and cheap food in limited quantities was all he desired, and little Jim (one of his only two surviving relatives who lived with him, and performed the duties of cook and general household drudge) obtained but a meagre supply of even that. What wonder then if the child was weak, that his large blue eyes gleamed like a maniac's deep sunken in their sockets, if his cheeks had fallen inward until his cheek bones were painfully prominent, and his white lips tightly drawn over his pearly teeth. "Was it singular that he trembled continually, and staggered as he walked, or that he was compelled to pause, sit down and rest on the landing

of each flight of stairs when ascending to his aerial habitation?"

When not otherwise employed, the child went around the alleys and courts, gathering rags and stray articles—pieces of paper, metal or anything of value, taking all home for Skinner's inspection and estimate of value, and then to a junk dealer to whom he sold the same, being careful to drive a close bargain, and hurry home with the money. The proceeds of such sales were devoted to the purchase of food and fuel, all they ever had; for under no circumstances would Skinner have expended one penny so long as the industry of little Jim could supply those wants.

Ralph Skinner had never been married. Just why, could only have been conjectured, but nobody was sufficiently interested in him to care to fathom the secret. Rumor ran, that at an early age he had been disappointed in matrimonial aspirations, and that the lady, for whom he had conceived a degree of cold regard, was still living, and with her only child, a young lady, resided somewhere in the western suburbs of the city. The husband and father had died bankrupt leaving them as a legacy merely a good name. When he became the matrimonial rival of Ralph Skinner, he was wealthy and universally regarded as an honest and enterprising business man. He was essentially every man's friend, a generous, open-hearted man amid a world full of narrow-minded, grasping, heartless wretches clamoring for the last drachm of the pound of flesh, and the last drop of blood.

It was also rumored that Ralph Skinner, burning for revenge, and spurred on by implacable hatred, had during long years, with dogged leisure and fiendish

deliberation, crept onward step by step, point by point, thread by thread, weaving a snare of circumstances with which to consummate Duane Worsham's financial ruin. He had schemed and toiled during his whole life, each year to him a century, and at last, when Worsham was about to lay down the burden of life and glide away into the dark unknown, Skinner had the infinite satisfaction of beholding the financial wreck of his hated rival. It was no part of his plan to consummate Worsham's financial ruin for others' substantial benefit, and so, little by little, he had made inroads, gathered in this and that—this mortgage, that note and bond, until at last he had absorbed the entire estate. He had endeavored also to cloud the fair fame of the man he so loved to hate, and the foul tongue of slander had wagged with nervous force and gushing fervor, but in vain, for Duane Worsham wore Honor's impenetrable coat of mail.

Mrs. Grundy, with a confidential wink and nod, asserted that according to rumor Ralph Skinner had always been a morose mortal, came into the world with a vicious snarl, was a very troublesome baby, a sullen, unnatural boy, and at an early age developed full-fledged, into a grasping, hard-hearted, soulless miser. "He is a thorough atheist," she said, "and this little life is all in all to him."

He had lived seventy years, and though withered, wrinkled and gray, his step was quick and firm, eyes clear, glance keen and swift, and mind unclouded. The weight of years had not bowed his form and the flagellations of time had served but to toughen and season each muscle and cord.

Thoroughly trained in that best of schools, experience, he knew how to speculate upon others' needs and to coin their misfortunes into his profit. "God helps those who help themselves," was his favorite maxim, and well had he lived it.

A ready reckoner, a skillful penman, and learned in the law, he was entirely competent to manage his complicated affairs without aid or counsel. He seldom required the services of attorneys, and only when compelled to appear in court did he employ them. Even then they were mere figure-heads, for he managed his case in minutest detail, the legal mouthpieces merely promulgating his theories and constructions of law, presenting faithfully and only such points and evidence as Skinner had previously secured and arranged.

In his legal contests he was rarely unsuccessful, and the legal fraternity despised, and the business community feared him, and so he stood utterly alone in the world, and at war with all human kind.

He had risen early that New-Year's morning, even before it was quite daylight, and having aroused little Jim from his pleasant dream of eating and merry-making with a joyous company, at a table groaning under the weight of an enormous quantity of things delicious to the taste and wholesome to the stomach, sent the feeble child to a coal yard in the neighborhood to buy and bring home a bucket of coal. As he waited for the boy's return, he sat in his chair by the stove and busied himself with splitting kindling, from a hardwood, knotty board, with a dull knife, and was so employed when suddenly he paused and listened. What did he hear? "Tramp, tramp, tramp!" Some one ascending the stairs. "Up—up—up!" A brief

pause on each landing and then upward again—feeble, tottering steps. He knew that Jimmie had been long enough absent to obtain the coal and return, and those sounded like his feeble, hesitating footsteps, yet his guilty conscience scourged him with apprehension, his face grew white and he arose from his chair trembling violently.

Nearer came the footsteps, louder the echo through the great hall, and he shrank down behind his chair, firmly grasping a heavy iron bar.

Tramp—tramp came the footsteps, a pause on the last landing, and then the door swung open and Jimmie entered, trembling from fatigue and quite breathless, bearing on his shoulder a large brown duck sack, which he cast on the floor, exclaiming joyfully, "Oh, uncle, I found this in the snow by the new house across the way."

With fiendish exclamations of delight, Skinner rushed from his place of retreat behind his chair and knelt down on the floor by the sack. His face instantly changed expression, fear gave place to joy, and deathly pallor to a deep scarlet flush. He breathed heavily as though undergoing violent exercise, and tremulously muttered disjointed sentences. His fingers worked in nervous spasms at the piece of whip-cord which secured the mouth of the sack, and he pulled frantically at the ends which only tightened the knot. Finally he struggled to his feet, still pulling at the string, placed his foot upon the bag and strained every muscle, but the effort was fruitless, for the whip-cord was very strong and he could not break it. Finally he sank down on the floor, quite exhausted, and said to Jimmie in a husky voice, "bring me the knife on the floor there,

by the stove." Jimmie obeyed, and Skinner with a desperate thrust, severed the string and out rushed the contents of the sack. There were a pocket memorandum book, soiled and finger-worn, several packages of letters, a large calf-skin wallet in which, with other similar papers, was a large envelope containing official documents. It had passed through the mail, had been sealed with red wax, and bore the Chicago post mark of late date.

He uttered an exclamation of surprise as he observed the address, "Mark Barry, Buffalo, N. Y.," arose to his feet, went to the window, and carefully examined the papers. His excitement was intense as he perused them, and he frequently gave vent to exclamations of delight. When he had carefully examined all, he returned and knelt down by the sack. The room was very cold, no fire having been lighted in the heat-proof stove that morning, and, as old Skinner knelt down, bending over the contents of the sack, he shivered and suffered intensely. But the contemplation of his gain so occupied his thoughts that he was insensible to the pain. He rubbed his withered hands together, muttered broken sentences incoherent and inaudible, and as he handled over the articles one by one, his toothless jaws were locked together and his nose and chin almost met. He was a crouching, cringing, loathsome object, and the hideous expression of his face portrayed the reign of the worst passions of his vile nature.

At length apparently satisfied with his inspection, he returned the clothing to the sack, tucked it under the bed, put the book and papers carefully away in the great iron-bound walnut chest, and then with pleased

countenance, returned to his chair, sat down and resumed his work of splitting kindlings.

When Jimmie reached the pavement he laughed heartily as he observed a tall man wrapped in a great-coat, which reached far below his knees, poking around in the snow with a long stick, close by the wall, just where he had found the sack, but he hurried on toward the coal-yard, apparently not observing the earnest seeker across the way. Shortly he returned with the bucket of coal, kindled a fire in the stove, and then went forth to search for rags.

An hour later, as Ralph Skinner stood at the window of his garret watching the street-cleaners shoveling snow from the pavement, he saw them drag forth the body of a man dressed in the peculiar costume of a sailor. Instantly he raised the window-sash, gave vent to a prolonged whistle, and his shriveled face was wrinkled and contorted by a hideous smile. "As I thought," he muttered. "There has been foul play. Mark Barry was presumed to have fallen overboard from a Buffalo steamer one dark, stormy night, while on his way to Chicago. He was not missed until the following morning, and his body has not been found. It was known that he had a valise on board, but although every part of the vessel was searched, it could not be found, and so it was presumed that he had it with him when the accident occurred, and clung to it as he fell. It contained valuable papers, deeds, mortgages and doubtless a will. But that must have been lost or destroyed since, else it would have been in the sack with the other papers." He paused, looked around at the chest, chuckled fiendishly, glanced down toward the dead man on the opposite pavement,

shrugged his shoulders and continued: "The history of the whole affair is an open book to me. Mark Barry was en route to Chicago to look after and provide for his sister, Mrs. Worsham—*my dear friend*. An old bachelor, like myself, that is, a bachelor, but unlike me in all other respects, for he was what people term kind-hearted and generous. Ha, ha, ha!" The last words were uttered sneeringly, and he was silent a few moments, and stood gazing thoughtfully down on the crowd of people on the opposite pavement who had gathered around the dead man. Then he closed the window, leaned against the sash and continued: "He had disposed of all his property in Buffalo, and purchased very valuable real estate here. The deeds, he had with him when he started on that long journey without a boat." He laughed scornfully, nodded toward the chest, turned away from the window, went to the stove, stirred the fire, sat down in his chair and resumed:

"Mark Barry intended to spend the remainder of his life in this city, but he had no balance to spend, had drawn his full dues, ha—ha—ha! It was reported that he had made a will wholly in favor of his sister, Mrs. Worsham, but I presume that was a mere supposition. But what if he did? Grant that to be true, it will not interfere with my purposes in the least. I hold all the high cards, and I believe I know how to play them." Again that grim smile played among the wrinkles on his haggard, yellow face, and vanished on his ever scornful lips. The hard, cold expression returned to each feature in detail and he crouched down in his chair, chafing his bony hands together in vain endeavors to induce warmth. Finally he sat up, bent

shivering over the heat-proof stove and continued: "That vagabond sailor waylaid Mark Barry and threw him overboard. He expected to find the carpet-sack full of money, but the dog was disappointed, for only a package of letters, which he could not read, and the few dollars which he found in his victim's pockets constituted his reward. Now the fellow is dead enough to satisfy almost anybody, and there is no one to bring forth unpleasant developments. I am exceeding fortunate."

Long he sat thus communing with his own evil thoughts, grinning, chuckling, shivering over the fire, and continually chafing his withered hands, else they would have frozen. At length a light, hesitating step on the stairs broke the train of his meditations, and soon little Jim entered the room with his sack on his shoulder, partly filled with rags and paper, the result of his morning's search.

The boy looked cold and weary, but that in nowise disturbed Skinner's equanimity or excited his sympathy, for he was a stranger to such impulses, and calling the child to him, said in a harsh tone, as he put a letter into his hand, "Take that to Foxey Grube; you know where he lives; take your plunder along and go by the junk shop. Bring all the money home—mind that, now, and drive a sharp bargain, do you hear! And look you, don't be too long about it, if you want anything to eat this morning."

A sad, discouraged expression came on the child's face as he put forth his utmost strength, lifted the sack to his shoulder and hurried away, while old Skinner drew the table up before the heat-proof stove, took from the iron-bound chest a package of legal cap writing paper, pen and ink, and lastly the book and papers which he had found in the sack.

CHAPTER III.

INTRODUCING MICHAEL SNOOZER.

Michael Snoozer was the proprietor of a saloon and dance house in the northern suburbs of the city, bordering the lake, the locality being popularly known as "The Sands." He was the oldest inhabitant of that quarter—the pioneer—and had amassed considerable wealth, a large portion of which had been acquired through fraud, robbery or murder. The human wrecks which floated around him and trembled with fear in his presence, hinted darkly in whispers among themselves of piratical deeds upon the lake, of which Snoozer was the chief beneficiary, and it was a common saying among them, also in whispers, that the human blood that had been spilled by violence in the vicinity of "The Sands" through Snoozer's instrumentality would form a solid pavement from the Dew Drop Inn to the center of the city.

Snoozer was something of a politician. That is to say, at every election he marched to the various voting places herds of talking animals in human forms, each beast carrying in his hand a slip of paper placed there by Snoozer. As to the names on those tickets, or the political party represented, none of those human cattle thought or cared to inquire. Indeed, it was to them no matter of interest or consequence which party triumphed at the polls, for they constituted an independent organization of which Snoozer was the Grand Sachem, and they only needed to know, to do his will.

As for Snoozer, he was ever open to conviction in political matters, ever ready to yield to the weight of argument when properly presented at the proper time, but it is a remarkable fact that he always abstained from an expression of his opinions relative to the merits of the various candidates for office until the day of election, when he invariably received numerous calls from aspirants to official honors and emoluments. Furthermore, another significant fact is that Snoozer always seemed happy on that day, and on the day following passed the time alone in his council chamber in planning additions and repairs to his premises. As for the human cattle driven by him to the polls and voted, visions of the night's carouse at Snoozer's dance house (which invariably followed election day) was the potent agent which influenced them in the casting of their ballots and made them eager to fulfill their part of the contract. As a reward for their loyalty, free beer flowed at the Dew Drop Inn, and the degree of their enjoyment was measurable only by the capacity of their stomachs to contain the villainous compound of hop juice and aloes.

Michael Snoozer was a Spanish-Indian-Negro-Chinaman. That is to say, his great-grandfather, a Spaniard, married an Indian woman. His grandfather married a full-blooded Negro woman, and his mother was a Chinawoman. Probably just such a mongrel never before existed, and it is quite certain that his counterpart could not have been found the world over. In him were concentrated the peculiar race characteristics of each of his ancestors, at least all of their evil tendencies, and whatever there was of good in their natures was never developed in his. When he came

howling into the world, a veritable human monstrosity, nobody would have for one moment believed that he would eventually become the manipulator of the elections of a great city, and the haughty proprietor of the Dew Drop Inn. He possessed the bombastic bravado of the Spaniard, the treachery and ferocity of the Indian, the covetousness and brutality of the African, and the shrewdness and insincerity of "the heathen Chinees."

Snoozer was eminently a self-made man. He had never attended school, and yet he acquired considerable historical and geographical knowledge, and could read, write and compute in a manner peculiarly his own, and consequently his opinions in all matters from gospel to cock-fighting were accepted as final and unimpeachable evidence by his humble and admiring subjects. Bloated, bottle-nosed politicians were frequent visitors at the Dew Drop Inn, and many an "Honorable M. C." at midnight and in disguise crept into Snoozer's council-chamber to barter with that crafty and august representative of so many hundreds of votes.

What wonder, then, if Snoozer became offensively arrogant and tyrannical as he contemplated the widening of his circle of influence and popularity? If he confidently anticipated that in the near future, aspirants to the highest official honors within the gift of the people would cringe before him and humbly barter for his political aid, is it at all surprising?

Michael Snoozer was forty-five years old, five feet seven inches in height, and weighed two hundred pounds. His complexion was swarthy, a reddish-yellow, hair coarse, black and wavy, eyes small, glittering black and deep set into almond-shaped sockets.

His nose was of enormous size, broad at the base, bridgeless, flat and twisted sidewise, having been considerably disarranged by an antagonist in a fight. His mouth was of enormous size, and his heavy, flabby lips were never free from the stain of tobacco, which he devoured in enormous quantities. His head, massive-oval, with receding forehead, knotted and gnarled, was set square down on broad shoulders, with scarcely the semblance of a neck intervening.

He was not noted for energy. In truth it was slyly hinted, even within the charmed circle of his power at "The Sands," and within the very walls of The Dew Drop Inn, that he was decidedly averse to even moderate muscular exertion, but for industry in sleeping his equal could nowhere be found. Not unfrequently, when engaged in conversation with the common frequenters of his doggery, he would relapse into a quiet little cat-nap, breaking off in the middle of a sentence, and leaving his listeners very much in doubt as to his precise meaning. However, when money was the subject of his conversation, it was remarked that he was always wide-awake, and his most inexorable enemy could not have justly accused him of stupidity. His Dew Drop Inn was a low, rambling structure of many irregular angles and unshapely gables. It consisted of the original main building, long and narrow, in which were the saloon and dance-room, where nightly, painted outcast women mingled with vile, debauched men in lascivious dances, interrupted by occasional personal encounters, blasphemings, blows and bloodshed. To the main building had been constructed at various times, as election returns would warrant, numerous additions of every known style of

architecture, from flat-roofed shed to mansard roof and dormer windows. In a remote corner of this rambling structure, away from the din and confusion of the saloon and dance room, was Snoozer's private apartment. It was elegantly furnished, and visitors observed at first glance that arrangements for sleeping were ample even to the point of luxuriousness, and that comfort in that respect had been one of the chief objects in view in the furnishing. The massive high-post bedstead, with wide canopy and heavy damask curtains, which, when drawn together, would envelop the occupant in midnight darkness, the heavy counterpane, white as driven snow, and the downy bed and pillows, were suggestive of and inviting to repose. Here the great man of "The Sands" passed three-fourths of his time in dead slumber, the balance being about equally divided between the business affairs of his establishment and political jugglery. This was his council chamber, the inner court of the charmed circle of his power and influence, and, reclining comfortably in his easy chair beside the round marble-topped center table, he would smile benignantly upon the Honorable M. C. and upon the bloated bottle-nosed politician as they were secretly ushered into his august presence when stars twinkled and the chanticler loudly proclaimed "the witching hour."

Snoozer's proper name, as names are transmitted, was Campos, the name of his great-grandfather, the Spaniard, but his debut on the stage of life being left-handed and without permission of clergyman or magistrate, his Mongolian mother, acting upon the suggestion of a waggish miner in the California mining camp where she lived and ushered him into the world,

coined a name for her hybrid offspring. The name was, undoubtedly, suggested to the mind of the miner on account of the child's predisposition to ease and comfort, and the state of unbroken slumber in which a greater portion of his childhood was passed, and hence the appropriateness of his adopted name, "Snoozer." Just how, where or when he came into possession of the Michael portion of his name can never be known, but the fact remains that it constituted a part of his cognomen. Howbeit, he had never been christened and really had no right to any name.

But it was neither an Honorable M. C. nor a bottle-nosed politician with whom Snoozer sat in earnest conversation before a glowing coal fire in his council chamber that stormy New-Year's eve. Within the city were sounds of rejoicing, and the great bells tolling a sad parting to the old and a joyous welcome to the new-born year. At "The Sands" there was a horrible din of discordant sounds, the rattle of dice, the click of billiard balls and beer glasses, snatches of obscene songs, loud blasphemies, and the echoes of dancing feet. The caldron of sin boiled furiously, bubbled and frothed, wafting its fumes toward the city, contaminating its moral atmosphere with that subtle poison which wrecks the body and destroys the soul. Around and around in cross currents and whirlpools flowed the tide of sinful human souls, and Satan held high carnival.

But those two men as they sat in the seclusion of the council chamber could only hear faint echoes of the din and confusion without, for the walls of the apartment had been constructed especially to exclude

sound as well as winter's cold and summer's heat, and the builder had succeeded admirably.

Snoozer's visitor was tall, lithe, graceful, and the polished gentleman in manners and conversation, but his dark, handsome face bore the sad record of dissipation. His features seemed never in repose, for even when in deep meditation he sat gazing steadily into the fire during a pause in the conversation, his face was a mirror over which his thoughts floated that one might see and read. As he talked he endeavored to appear calm and indifferent but the effort the more fully betrayed the mental excitement under which he labored.

Snoozer merely listened to the conversation of his visitor, in which he was by no means interested; on the contrary, it seemed to annoy him, for he was endeavoring to think, and the chattering of his companion rendered the effort futile. He was endeavoring to fathom the most secret thoughts and purposes of his guest, and to discover just how much financial blood he could draw from him then and there without totally destroying the goose which had long been laying golden eggs for him. He sat and listened with half closed eyes, as though about to sink into a sly cat-nap, leaving his visitor to talk to the furniture and the four walls—listened and gazed questioningly into his companion's face from the corners of his almond-shaped eyes, reclining comfortably in his easy chair, seemingly indifferent to the subject of conversation, and indeed to all else in the world save ease and comfort.

The little French clock on the mantel ticked industriously, the fire sputtered and roared as dashes of snow came down the chimney, and the wind rattled a

loose shutter somewhere on the building, and the roar of waves on the beach mingling with the frightful discordant sounds from the saloon and dance room, invaded even the quietness of the council chamber. Suddenly, the great bells of the city, which had been tolling a sad parting to the old, began a joyous clang and clatter to the new-born year, and a cannon down on the shore, even amid the howling storm, boomed out a thunderous welcome across the tumultuous bosom of the lake; but these two men were deaf to all sounds save their own voices, and indifferent to all sentiment not encompassed by their immediate personal interests. Both were cold, cruel, scheming villains, from whose souls every pure and generous impulse had departed, and there they sat and heard not the merry peals of the bells, nor the booming of the cannon, nor the din of the saloon and dance room—sat scheming, plotting each against the other, diamond cutting diamond, and being cut and crumbled in the process.

Evidently the subject of their conversation was one of grave and urgent importance to the visitor, but a matter of extreme indifference to Snoozer, for he whistled, shuffled his feet, closed his eyes, yawned and said in a half whisper,

“Let up, pard, w’ats th’ us’ o’ chinnin’ all night ’bout w’at nobody knows nothin’ about. I’s told ye all I knows—w’at more d’ ye want?”

“‘What more do I want?’ I want the truth and I want the papers. You are playing me false or you are endeavoring to wring more money from me before fulfilling your part of the agreement. I want you to understand now that that game won’t win. You are ‘as deep in the mud as I am in the mire,’ and you

dare not go back on your word. I paid you in advance even more than you demanded, and now you insult me by your dogged indifference. The work was done three months ago. Sandy was seen in the city to-day, and yet you say that he has not reported to you, that you have not received the papers or any word from him. It is strange, very strange, to say the least."

The visitor had risen from his chair as he talked and advanced a step toward the great Michael, almost threateningly.

Snoozer opened his eyes, sat upright, glanced fiercely into the face of his guest, filled his pipe from the tobacco jar on the table, arose, turned his back to the mantle, crossed his hands behind him, and with head inclined toward his left shoulder smoked placidly a moment, and then in a harsh discordant tone sang:

When Molly was young, she was pretty and gay,
But now she is old, and wrinkled and gray;
Here's to Molly the young—Dratt Molly the old,
Nobody would have her with a ship load of gold.

Fill the bowl to the brim,
Aye fill up the bowl,
And drink to young Molly—
Dratt Molly the old.

"How's that, pard, for a song? That's mine, tune an' all. Didn't know I was a poet an' musician, eh?" and Snoozer gazed insolently into the face of his guest from the corners of his little black eyes, which gleamed wickedly.

Stung by the ironical insolence of the great Michael, the young man stood still and mute for a moment, while his face changed in color from white to scarlet and from scarlet to dead white and his eyes gleamed fiercely into Snoozer's face, and his form quivered

with rage. A moment only did he stand thus, during which he gradually assumed the posture of Ajax defying the lightning, and then the pent-up torrent of his passion leaped its bounds and he hurled forth a perfect avalanche of accusation and denunciation. While he talked he had taken up his overcoat and gloves and had walked to the door, grasped the knob, and these were his parting words:

“Soulless, murderous villain, accursed wretch! so utterly abandoned and depraved that you flippantly and insolently ignore and repudiate even the common principles and practice of that quality of honor which unites into a common brotherhood all evil-doers. I’ll quit your accursed presence, and I swear that I will neither eat nor sleep until I see you gnawing prison bars like a wild beast fresh from the jungles. Curse you, a thousand curses on your wicked soul.” As he uttered the last words and swung open the door—

“Stop!”

It was the voice of Michael Snoozer in thunder tones. People heard it as they passed along the street, and paused, obedient to that irresistible command, for well they knew the voice and the terrible significance of its tone.

“Stop, I say, stop!” and Michael Snoozer dashed the pipe to the hearth, shivering it into fragments, and swinging his hands above his head he brought them down by his side violently as he thundered forth that startling command:

“Stop!!!”

Charles Barry paused with hand on the door knob, glanced around over his shoulder at the man who stood before the fire, glaring fiercely upon him,

"Sit down!" commanded Snoozer, with voice raised but little above his ordinary tone, while with arm outstretched and quivering forefinger he pointed to the chair from which the young man had risen.

Charles Barry gazed a moment at the towering form of his companion, wavered, seemed undecided, but as the finger still quivered and pointed at the chair, he seemed to feel the force of that silent command and to comprehend the danger of opposition, and yielding, he closed the door gently, and returned and sat down in the chair, still holding his overcoat and hat in his hands.

Snoozer smiled in his own peculiarly horrible manner, took from the mantel a cigar box, opened, held it towards Barry, and said in his ordinary voice, but in the same commanding tone:

"Have a smoke!"

Mechanically Barry obeyed, for Snoozer's invitation was but a command, took a cigar from the box which he held listlessly in his hand, and looked inquiringly into the face of the talking beast. While the animal replaced the box on the mantel, lighted a cigar, and then resumed his position, with back to the fire and hands folded behind him. He stood thus silently several minutes, tracing with his eyes the figures on the wall, when, observing that Barry was not smoking, he took a match-holder from the mantel and held it out, saying:

"Have a match? Light your cigar, pard, and be sociable."

When Barry had lighted his cigar and leaned back in his chair, Snoozer resumed his position and posture before the fire, drew the cigar half its length into his mouth, closed his teeth upon it and said:

"It's talking ye wants, is it, pard? Why, what's th' use o' chinnin' wen 't wont do no good? I told ye all I knowd at first, an' that's th' end on 't. Ye're makin' a great splutter 'bout suthin', ye don't know w'at, an' to my 'pinion ye 'd better be sorter reasonable an' not go an' make a blamed fool o' y'rself. Y'r cussin' an' threatenin' *me*, won't change th' sito'ation in th' least, and I'd advise ye t' just cool down a trifle an' wait until I can find out w'at th' matter is. *Ye threatens, does ye?* Well, now, Sonnie, jist take my advise an' let that job out. Ye're bound t' lose in that game—my word for it. *My life's in y'r hands, eh?* Now that's a good 'un. *Why*, youngster, ye're plumb crazy, clean gone, raving mad, *ye forgot that ye were at The Sands*, an' if I'd just say so, y'r life wouldn't be worth the ashes of a burned straw. No, pard, ye've too much sense t' blather that-a-way, ye wouldn't do it if ye dared, an' ye wouldn't dare to, ye knows it. Now that ends that part o' the biz, an' w'at next? Why t' tell ye th' same old story, that I don't know w'at has become of Sandy or th' papers. He's got into trouble somewhere I spect, an' can't let me know 'bout 't or I'd a hearn from him long ago, an' ye'd had y'r blamed papers afore this time. Ye knows well that Sandy doused Mark Barry overboard accordin' as I agreed with ye, ye *knows* that, fer th' newspapers said that th' old chap had gone into th' drink in th' night, an' that was true. Of course *we* didn't know exactly *how* it *happened*, not a bit of it, oh no! *We* s'posed he'd got up in th' night t' get a drink o' water, an' not finding any on board, got mad an' tried to swaller th' lake. Howsomever, he hasn't been hearn from in no shape, human or ghost, an' that Sandy cooked his goose there

can't be no kind of doubt. Now that's th' whole up-shot o' th' matter, biled down solid, an' ye may fret an' stew, cuss an' threaten till y're black in th' face, an' crazy as a bed bug, an' it wont make no kind of difference with th' outcome. Howsomever, ye might make a blamed fool o' y'rself an' spile y'r chances for a fortin' an' lose y'r life in th' bargain, so ye might, an' if that's what ye wants t' do, why of course drive ahead."

He had been chewing the cigar as he talked, and having ground it into a pulp, threw it into the fire, lighted another and continued:

"Ye aren't proceedin' right anyhow, leastwise, 't wouldn't be my ticket th' way ye thinks o' doing. Ye've got hold o' th' wrong string, sure an' if ye continer to pull on 't ye'll tighten a tangle ye'll never be able to unloose."

"Well, go on, out with it," said Barry, as he took the cigar from his mouth, blew a pearly cloud of smoke above his head, and leaning back in his chair, fixed his gaze on Snoozer's face. He had suddenly become interested and mollified, for Snoozer's last words foreshadowed a new scheme, and he was impatient to hear it.

"Why, here it is," replied Snoozer, as he twirled the cigar in his mouth, leaned back against the mantel, and with the fore finger of his right hand beat time to his words on the palm of his left: "It's right here, plain as the nose on a man's face, an' if ye'll only look ye can see it with half an eye. Ye want t' gobble th' whole kettle of fish an' give nobody else even a smell. Ye might make it, but ye stand a hundred chances t' one t' fail, which, if ye did, ye'd lose *all*, an' y'r life in th'

bargain, perhaps. An' even if ye should win, ye'll never be clear o' danger, for ye never can tell w'at will turn up in futer w'en ye have people t' deal with that knows y'r secrets, an' that ye have t' pay hush money to, t' keep their fly-traps shut an' their tasters from waggin'. Now, here's th' pint: Ye've got rid o' th' old man, y'r uncle, w'at had th' money ye wants. Good enough so far; he's safe at th' bottom o' th' lake, an' nobody but Snoozer knows who pulled th' wires t' put him there, an' I'm not goin' t' squeal so long as ye treats me right; so ye're safe enough there. W'at next? Why this: If ye try t' smouge th' whole pot, don't ye see, ye'll get y'rself into a row with th' Worshams! Them law scrapes are bad pills for diseases; they're not made t' cure, an' so, if ye goes t' law about it, ye may get a physic that doctors don't deal out; ye may get y'rself badly scratched in the fight—all hacked t' pieces by w'at them law fellers calls th' double-edged sword of Justice. Eh?" Receiving an affirmative nod, he continued: "Well, now I'm gettin' down t' hard pan, an' here it is: when ye get them papers, just put fire t' 'em, gather up th' ashes an' scatter 'em out on the lake. That cussed will ye wants t' get out o' th' way, an' th' other papers wont do ye no good. They might do ye harm, howsomever, by blowin' up th' whole ranch if found about ye, 'cause everybody knows that Mark Barry had them with him when he concluded t' go down t' th' bottom of th' lake t' find out w'at was thar. Yes, burn 'em all up, for that's th' winnin' card, or my name aren't Snoozer. W'at then? Don't ye see, pard? Plain as a speck on y'r eyelash. Now I've come t' bed rock, an' we'll pan out th' dust. Here it is: That will out of th' way, ye'll get half th' property at once,

as there's but two straight heirs of ye. Well, ye'll get a hundred thousand at least. Good! good enough so far—then w'at? Now, pard, the yaller dust begins t' pan out handsomely, an' here it is all washed out. Sweeten th' old woman's coffee some fine morning, an' then, when ye gets ready, marry th' daughter. Ye're on good terms with her, according to y'r tell, an' ye can do it slick as mice."

As Snoozer talked, young Barry seemed deeply interested. He changed position in his chair momentarily, and a deep crimson flush crept over his face. From the corners of his almond-shaped eyes, Snoozer narrowly watched the effect of his words, and he was gratified by the prospect of more "hush money," which his plans, when executed, would bring to him. As Snoozer uttered the last words, young Barry sprang to his feet, grasped his hand and exclaimed, excitedly: "You're right, Snoozer. You are right, and I'll do it! True, she is my cousin, but what of that? She likes me, I believe, and will become my wife if her mother's objections can safely be removed in the way you propose. Will you undertake the affair?"

Snoozer remained silent a moment, looking down steadily into Barry's eyes, while the corners of his huge mouth began to creep back toward his ears, his face contorted, and wrinkles radiated from the corners of his eyes. A horrid grin was on his face as he drooped his head over on his left shoulder, and answered, "*I might, pard, for pay.*"

"Will a thousand dollars be enough?"

"Yes."

"Done. And now," continued Barry, as he took out his pocketbook, opened it with trembling hands,

drew forth a bank note and handed it to Snoozer, "here is a trifle in advance, would give you more, but can not spare it to-night for I have had a bad run of luck lately. However, this will be something on account, and you may as well have it now." As he talked he put on his overcoat and hat, drew on his left glove and put on his fur muffler. Then he advanced and extended his right hand to Snoozer, saying: "And now, good night. We understand each other thoroughly I believe, and I shall do nothing without having previously consulted you." There was a clasping of hands, a cordial parting, and then the door closed behind Charles Barry, and Snoozer was alone. He stood awhile looking toward the door, chewed his cigar and smiled grimly. Then he straightened out the crumpled bank note, held it up in the light and said, as he closely examined it: "A figure five and a horse collar behind it—fifty. All right, Barry, I'll attend t' th' biz, depend on it. I know which side of my bread is buttered."

Half an hour later Snoozer was snugly ensconced in bed trumpeting forth nasal music loud and sonorous, while the fire sank down in the grate, and the council chamber was shrouded in darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

A GENEROUS DONATION.

New-Year's day was being generally celebrated throughout the city. It was an occasion of general festivity and rejoicing, and the Garden City was merry and sparkling. People seemed to have agreed each with the other to appropriately celebrate the day regardless of business affairs or the inclemency of the weather. In the business portion of the city, Sabbath quietness reigned, the stores were closed and silent, and only an occasional pedestrian hurried along, leaning against the cutting wind and wading through drifting snow. In the residence portion, particularly along the beautiful avenues bordering the lake, sleigh bells jingled merrily and gay young people sitting very close together under elegant fur robes, dashed along at full speed, in cutters behind spirited horses. Fashionable gentlemen abroad making New-Year's calls passed in and out of those stately mansions, and ripples of laughter floated out from spacious halls and vestibules as doors were opened for visitors to pass. In homes of "the masses," children romped and played with toys, while parents joined in the general hilarity and were children again. In homes of the poor, God help them, when bitter, pinching want, and gaunt hunger are perpetual guests, children shivered over stoves barely warm or played with home-made toys, while old folks sat close together with sad faces, talking in low tones, thinking over and living again the happiness of

childhood. And so, from millionaire to beggar, the day was a golden leaf in the record-book of the year, and all seemed determined to make the most of the occasion, and to snatch pleasure from the selfish skeleton hands of every-day life.

Rudolph Merryfellow arose early that New-Year's morning, even before the servant had lighted a fire in the kitchen stove. It was not without a severe struggle with disinclination to face the whistling cutting wind and frosty air, that finally he slipped away from the side of his dear little wife, and left her and young Merryfellow sleeping peacefully and resting from the fatigue of the previous two days' journey.

As Merryfellow closed his front gate and faced the freezing northern blast, he heartily wished himself back under the warm bed-clothes. He hesitated, with hand on the latch, looked up and down the street wistfully, muttered something about the long walk and bitter cold, drew on his heavy fur gloves, adjusted his ear muffs and scarf, and then with sudden energy hurried away toward the commercial center of the city.

He rattled along, first at a fast walk, whistling a merry tune, his feet keeping time on the frosty stone pavement to the measure of his music, and then as the nipping cold penetrated his clothing, his speed was increased to a trot, and finally to a run which would have done credit to a champion sprinter. As he ran, his body was bent forward like a diver preparing to spring, his arms swung back and forth by his sides as one in the act of swimming, and his long strides measured the pavement with astonishing rapidity.

By foundries, work shops, factories and markets, through banks of drifted snow and over treacherous

street crossings, with the speed of a thoroughbred matched for the sweepstakes. On, on, until as he reached the corner of Lake and Wells streets (now Fifth avenue), he slackened speed and turned down Lake street toward the Union depot.

The sun was just rising from the bosom of the lake, tinting the blue waters with gold and purple, flushing the sky with vermillion and chasing away the shadows of early dawn, Merryfellow walked slowly, looking up at the buildings, paused frequently and glanced around, as though searching for some familiar object. And thus with his hands clasped behind him, he sauntered along, until finally he started forward at a quick pace with the exclamation, "there it is, that is the place." He floundered across the street through the deep snow, reached the opposite pavement, walked half a square, paused before the wall of a half-finished building, and as he glanced up at the bare walls, towering above him, and then over at the tall building with iron shutters across the way, he muttered in a satisfied tone, "Yes, this is the place beyond a doubt. It was here beside this wall that the sack and I parted company so unceremoniously, and unless some prowling rag picker has forestalled me, the sack is safe under the snow very near where I now stand." Seizing a long stick leaning against the wall, he began poking vigorously in the snow, and not until the hitherto smooth surface presented the appearance of a plowed field did he desist, and, throwing down the stick, exclaimed: "No use, it is gone."

An hour later, Merryfellow was in his own beautiful home seated at breakfast, and doing ample justice to a bounteous repast. His early morning walk and vigor-

ous exercise had sharpened his appetite wonderfully, and he devoured food in quantities that would have astonished and horrified a boarding-house keeper. Of course Merryfellow could not talk, being more pleasantly and profitably occupied at the time, and, indeed, the demands of his voracious appetite would not permit a moment's intermission. Trim, bright, light and sparkling Mrs. Merryfellow entirely monopolized the conversation; not from choice, but simply force of necessity. She could not endure dead silence, broken only by crunching of food (a habit with Merryfellow which she had in despair ceased to endeavor to correct), and so she laughed, sparkled and said pretty things in her own pretty way, much to the delight of her hungry spouse. Vigorously he shoveled the food into his mouth with knife and fork, right and left, and then both together; listened delightedly, and laughed as he chewed, mumbling words of approval, smothered and inaudible, but expressing with his eyes what his mouth failed to convey. True, she had much to talk about—the pleasant incidents of her visit to her parents at her dear old home in New Jersey, of the pleasant reunions of childhood playmates—and companions of more mature years, of her meetings and conversations with the friends of her girlhood, who of them had married and appeared to regret it, how many encumbrances each possessed, how they lived, agreeably or otherwise, the degree of their material prosperity or misfortune, and so on *ad infinitum*. To this wonderful hash of news and revelations of family and personal secrets, she added and mixed, as she went along, a lively variety of wit, sarcasm and mirth, quite amusing. The nurse was “crooning” young Merryfellow in the

adjoining room, and the shrill discordant notes of her lullaby served as an appropriate accompaniment to mamma's musical ripples of laughter, and papa's hoarse smothered exclamations of delight, while the plaintive wail of young Merryfellow formed a charming quartette, strange, original, and highly entertaining.

As for Merryfellow, he could not have talked had he been at leisure. He might have caressed his charming little wife, as he had already done numberless times since her return, told her how dearly he loved her, vowing that he would suffer himself to be roasted alive just to afford her one moment's happiness, and then smile in his peculiar manner at her witty response, that she would prefer not to have him roasted, being quite satisfied with him raw and natural. However, that subject exhausted, he would have been at a dead lock, and, for want of other amusement, would doubtless have seized young Merryfellow and danced a hornpipe in exuberance of spirits, and for the joint entertainment of mamma, the kitchen wench and the nurse. The truth is, that he would have had no pleasant subject to discuss, for his three months' grass widowerhood had not been a pathway strewn with roses, nor his lonely couch "a flowery bed of ease." At best he could have talked of business matters, which, under the circumstances, would have been shockingly inappropriate, and so it was fortunate that his sunbeam could draw from an exhaustless treasury of pleasant incident, spiced with wit and humor, else their breakfast might have been partaken of in silence, broken only by munching of food, the plaintive wail of young Merryfellow, and the soul harrowing howl of the nurse.

It is well that we have more clouds than sunshine, more sorrow than joy, else we would but lightly value the choicest gifts of our Heavenly Father. It is well that the way is rugged and thorny and the heights difficult to ascend, that cares, sorrows and vexations meet and buffet us at every step, that only by toil of brain or hands may we secure the substantial comforts, and the pure pleasures of life, else we would grow weary of an easy down-hill way, and, surfeited with pleasure, we would be strangers to keen enjoyment, and life would become an insupportable burden.

If, then, after their three months' separation, and weary longings for the sweet companionship never before so thoroughly appreciated, these twin souls drank deep again from the fountain of pure affection and rejoiced in the sunlight of each other's presence, what wonder?—since all of life worth living for is the pure, unselfish love we bear one another.

Merryfellow laid down his knife and fork, drained from his cup the last drop of coffee, leaned back in his chair and confessed himself as thoroughly satisfied. Still he hesitated and looked wistfully at the coffee-pot, and as with one hand he drew his napkin across his mouth and with the other lifted his cup and held it out, he said, in a coaxing tone quite irresistible, "only another drop of coffee, Sugar-plum, to keep this piece of muffin company. I declare it is a pity to let it spoil, of course I'm not hungry, but will eat it from motives of economy." The cup was received by glad, dimpled little hands, and, instead of a drop or so (she knew him so thoroughly), was filled to the brim and sweetened just to his taste, as only she knew how to do, and while he sipped and played with his spoon she

prattled merrily, his deep basso voice chiming in now and then by way of approval. Finally she paused in the middle of a sentence, listened attentively a moment, arose, went to the window, hastily swung back the inside blind and looked out. "What is it, dear," he asked expectantly.

"Only Mrs. Worsham, across the way," she replied; "I thought some one opened the front gate, but it was only she opening their front blinds."

Returning, she resumed her seat and continued, "That reminds me, dear, we are so happy ourselves that we forget others. We have everything heart can desire—health, affection and a bountiful supply of the good things of this world." While she talked in a low, emotional tone, somehow his chair, even as he sat upon it, glided around until he was close by her side. Somehow his arm found its way around her trim little waist, while his face moved around in front of hers. As she uttered the last word, it was partially smothered by two lips, which by some singular accident, came in contact with hers, and the noise of the concussion startled young Merryfellow, who had just fallen asleep, aroused the nurse from a rapturous dream of her William Henry Augustus Saint George, brought the wench from the kitchen to inquire if the water pipe had "busted," and awoke Towser, who had been snoozing quietly on the hearth, dreaming of his numerous progeny just around the corner in a neighbor's back yard, and scrambling to his feet, with his short, black hair all turned the wrong way, he snapped viciously at a chair leg and then elevated his nose and howled. This slight occurrence demoralized the council, and it was not until the nurse and cook were at

breakfast, and the Merryfellows were seated very close together before the fire in their charming little sitting-room, that the conversation was resumed. "I was about to say, when you, naughty dear, smothered my words and almost created a panic in the house—why can't you kiss softly, just so, love?" and, as she pressed her mouth to his, the merriest little smack imaginable followed, which could not have been heard ten feet, and as Merryfellow leaned back again in his chair, he smacked his lips as though he had just put a sugar plum in his mouth. "That is the way, dear," she added, with a merry twinkle of her eyes, "but you'll never learn my way, I've tried so long to teach you and you don't improve in the least." Then she arose, took a bottle of cologne from the mantel and moistened his mustache with some of the contents (he was an awful smoker), replaced the bottle on the mantel, resumed her seat by his side and continued, "Well, dear, I was saying we are so happy that we forget others, even at our very door, those who in early life, to say the least, were quite as comfortably situated as we are at this moment, and doubtless very happy. I allude to Mrs. Worsham."

"Yes, Worsham was once very wealthy, I knew him when I was a mere lad," responded Merryfellow, thoughtfully.

"Yes," continued his wife, "and Mrs. Worsham is now very poor—for ought we know, in utter destitution. I was thinking of it this morning as I lay in bed, feeling so disappointed to find you gone, and then I thought what a silly little goose I am to want to cling to you every minute. Yes, then in some way, I don't know what brought it into my mind, unless an

angel whispered to me, I began thinking of Mrs. Worsham, and that sweet, modest girl, her daughter Grace, and I wondered whether they would have a good dinner to-day and feel happy. I feared not, and the thought troubled me exceedingly. Then I began wondering whether they have plenty of fuel this bitter cold weather, and I was so troubled about it that I couldn't rest in bed, and so got up, and at that moment, dear, you came and I was so glad that I forgot all about it until I saw Mrs. Worsham open the shutters. And now, I want you to do something for me, will you, dear?"

"*Will I?*"

"But it is asking a great deal, dear."

"What is it, Dolly?"

"Oh, but you must promise you will do it before I tell you."

"Well, then—yes, out with it, ducky."

"Oh, you are such a precious dear," she replied, stroking his beard playfully. "Now hold up your head and look me right in the eyes, for I want to be sure that you understand and sympathize with me." Putting her right hand under his chin she held his face up, and as he leaned toward her, resting on the arm of her chair, she looked into his eyes and continued: "This is what I want, just put on your overcoat, hat and gloves, and wrap up nice and warm and trot down town like the good, precious, generous dear you truly are. Find the largest, choicest turkey imaginable, put it into a box, get two or three pounds of butter, a large can of fresh oysters, some canned fruit, corn, tomatoes, two or three pounds of nice cheese, and everything nice and good to eat you can think of. Put all in the

box and this with it," and she handed him a dainty note which he drew from the envelope and read aloud:

"God has blessed two persons with health, and love, and plenty, and has given them a little angel to love and cherish, all in one short year. Therefore, in joyful gratitude to our Heavenly Father for those blessings, we send to you these trifling gifts and beg you to accept of them and to rejoice with us on this, the first day of the New Year."

As he read the last words she said, "And I want you to put a five dollar bill in this note and pin it to the leg of the turkey, then nail the lid on the box and send it to Mrs. Worsham, so she will not know who sent it, won't you, dear, for *me*?"

As she talked, her ever-beautiful face was radiant, there was much feeling and earnestness in her voice, and tears came in her soft blue eyes. Gradually her chair had moved around until she almost faced him, and little by little she leaned forward on his knees, while as she talked her hands crept up his arms to his shoulders. Little by little also she had moved closer to him and upward, until, as she uttered the last words, her arms encircled his neck and her chair was vacant. Gradually also his great brawny arms had crept around her waist, and then she reclined in his embrace like a babe on its mother's bosom. Her words had gone straight to his great generous heart and it was swept by a flood of emotion strong and deep. As she paused for a reply his eyes were moist, and as he looked down on her fair, upturned face two dew drops, heart-distilled, coursed down his bronzed cheeks. His voice quivered perceptibly as he replied, "Will I do it, Dolly, dear? Why, to be sure I will; could I deny *you* any-

thing?" Immediately there followed a sound as of a passing bird, the tiniest little flutter imaginable, a half smothered exclamation of delight, a mysterious sound as of a tight-fitting cork being suddenly drawn from a full bottle, and as little Dolly Merryfellow fluttered to her feet from the arms of her spouse her face wore a charming flush and her eyes beamed with an indescribable light. "There, dear, that will do *now* (with decided emphasis on the last word, *now*). I'll fetch your overcoat and hat and bundle you up nice and warm, and then you must hurry away like a dear, generous hubby that you are, bless you." Quick little feet in number one and a half gaiters scampered away and came back in a moment, and charming little dimpled hands buttoned the great coat over Merryfellow's broad chest while he stood like a great giant, quiet and tractable, looking down smilingly on his charming little wife.

"There now, good-by, hubby dear," she said, patting him on the back as he stood in the front door, all bundled and fixed, as only she could do. "Now trot fast and hurry back, for I can't spare you long."

As he reached the pavement, he threw back a kiss on his great gloved hand, while she pouted her lips to catch it, and then, as he hurried away, she closed the door softly and returned to the sitting-room, took young Merryfellow from the crib, and, sitting down in the low rocking chair before the fire, sang to him a soft, sweet lullaby.

As Merryfellow hurried along toward the city market, he fell into a train of thought and conjecture with reference to the contents of the sack which he had found and lost. Suddenly he paused, removed his

right glove, unbuttoned his great-coat and felt in the inside pocket. An expression of blank amazement came on his face as he vigorously searched that capacious pocket, and he muttered disappointedly, "Gone, by jingo! There's a hole in the bottom, but it couldn't have gone through that." He stooped down and felt the skirt of his great-coat, but shook his head as he straightened up, saying: "No use, it is gone—leaked out over the top—too bad, by jingo!"

CHAPTER V.

FOXLEY GRUBE AT HOME.

Little Jim hurried along the street as fast as his feeble limbs could perform their functions, but he shivered as he ran, and whipped his thin, bare hands against his body, for they were very numb and cold. The wind twisted the sack around on his shoulder, and the deep snow impeded his progress, and his efforts exhausted his strength, but he dared not pause for rest, as the cold was intense, his clothing scant and his blood thin, and he knew that death followed close in his footsteps.

On, on, by great buildings, silent and cheerless; by toy shops where were temptingly displayed beautiful and amusing things made to gladden young hearts; by confectioners, where choice candies and delicious fruits were arrayed in rich profusion, to tempt the passer-by; on, by bakeries where fresh loaves of bread, rich, yellow cheese, delicious coffee rolls, warm and white with powdered sugar, where beautiful loaves of yellow cake, fresh and fragrant, and fruit cake that would melt in one's mouth, and mince pies fresh from the oven. On, on, with feeble, tottering steps, leaning against the cutting wind; on, by markets where were displayed splendid rounds and joints of meat, strings of sausage and rolls of head cheese; by restaurants from which came delightful odors of roasting meats, boiling coffee and stewing fruits to tempt the hungry. He longed to stop—to feast his eyes on all these beautiful and tempting things—but remembering the stern commands of

old Skinner, he hurried on, even while gaunt and relentless hunger gnawed his vitals, demanding either food or life.

He had not tasted food since noon the previous day, and even then (his weak stomach refusing the coarse, nauseous food) he had merely tasted, pushed his plate aside and crept away to his little stool in the corner by the heat-proof stove, leaving old Skinner to devour the last crumb and polish the plates with his tongue.

Weak and faint, he trudged along, facing the freezing wind, while tears flowed down his wan face. Poor, friendless child, almost naked, starving, driven out in the cold to hunt like a dog for food.

Finally he turned into Buffalo street, now known as Fourth avenue, tottered along under his heavy burden, passed on several squares, when he turned into a dark, narrow alley and paused in front of an old building. Leaning against the door frame, he knocked loudly on the door several times ere his summons was answered. Then there was a rattling of iron bolts and bars, the clanking of chains and the screeching of a key in a rusty lock, and the moldy door swung slowly back on its crazy hinges — backward a little way — and the sallow, shriveled face of an old Jew was thrust through the opening.

“Oh, it is you, youngster,” he said, in a cracked voice, and in the peculiar accent of his race. “What you got, eh, rags, bapier or rope?”

“Rags and paper,” was the feeble reply.

“Vell, why you no come in? Vat you sthan an’ look at me so hard for?” responded the Jew, pettishly. “Come in, I say,” and as he swung the door open,

Jimmie staggered in and emptied the contents of his sack on the floor.

"How many pounds," demanded the Jew as he shiveringly blew his breath on his cold, shriveled hands, and stamped his feet impatiently.

"I don't know exactly," was the hesitating reply.

"Vell *I* don't, I'm sure," snarled the Jew as he kicked the rags and paper over with his foot evidently estimating their weight and value, "How much you want for him."

"Twenty-five cents," replied Jimmie with energy.

In response, the Jew puckered his shriveled lips, elevated his chin until his gaze rested on the ceiling, gave vent to a prolonged whistle, followed by a number of swinish grunts in quick succession, and then exclaimed vehemently, "*Twenty-five cent!* you are crazy poy, an' old Skinner is a fool. Now you just put him all in der sack und dakes him right home to dot old rascal Skinner, und dell him dot old Jacobs sends his gobliments mit der new year, dot's all. Und just dell him I vont bays dot much monish, und dot I can buy more as dwice dot much rags und bapier, for twenty-five cent, any day."

"How much will you give," inquired Jimmie, timidly.

"How much I give, eh? Vell let me see," and the Jew stooped down and clawed over the icy rags, handled them one by one, slowly estimating their value, all the while mumbling, in broken English, in a whining tone, accompanied by vehement gestures, bitter complaints of the quality and quantity of the articles. Finally, with a beastly grunt, strongly expressive of disgust, he arose to his feet, gave the rags a parting kick, and replied, "Vell I give you twelve cent, you take him, eh?"

"No, I won't take it," replied Jimmie, gathering up the rags and thrusting them vigorously into the sack.

"Vell den, just dakes him home to dot old miser Skinner," replied the Jew as he turned away and began to overhaul a lot of old iron, assorting it into different piles according to quality.

In a few moments Jimmie had replaced the rags in the sack, lifted it to his shoulder, and turned to go, when the Jew, who was kneeling at his work, arose to his feet and called out, "So you take him back to Skinner, eh?"

"No," replied Jimmie, quietly, "I shall go to Nussbaum's."

"He vont give you so much as I," whined the Jew, persuasively.

"I don't know about that, but I shall go there," responded Jimmie, moving toward the door.

"Come now my leidle sonnie, how much you dakes for him, anyhow, sure?" inquired Jacobs as he groveled toward the boy, whined and leered horribly, disclosing the two black, broken snags of front teeth—all that remained in his jaws, "How much you dakes for him now und no more fooling about him?"

"I told you twenty-five cents."

"Oh, pshaw! nonsense, Jimmie, come now, I gives you dwenty cent und never a penny more, dots all, you dakes him eh?"

Jimmie hesitated a moment, slowly returned, opened the sack, emptied the contents on the ground and silently held out his hand to the Jew, who in turn silently placed the money in his palm, and then the boy silently departed.

Jimmie, as he hurried along, could put his thin cold hands in his pockets, and, relieved of the burden, could run faster. The sack was large and heavy and he drew it around his shoulders like a cape, fastened it to his neck with a pin, allowing the long ends to hang down in front, and then went forward at a quick pace, which increased to a run as he turned up Clark Street. His speed was materially accelerated by a mind picture of old Skinner, which flitted before him, and the remembrance of that individual's parting injunction, that even a small quantity of nauseous food would be withheld if he loitered by the way. Therefore he ran with all the speed of which his feeble limbs were capable, until, in a beautiful portion of the city on a broad avenue, he paused breathlessly before an elegant three-story stone front building, ascended the broad flight of steps, rang the bell timidly and then stepped into the vestibule out of the cutting wind. His summons was quickly answered by a young woman elegantly attired, but on whose face was the hand-writing of vice and the certificate and seal of dissipation, that the world might read and know the hopeless depths to which she had fallen.

Yes, Mr. Grube is at home, she said kindly, in reply to his inquiry, and she conducted Jimmie up two flights of stairs, along a dark hall which gave back a ringing echo of their tread like footfalls on the stone pavement of a vault. Finally she paused before a door, knocked and listened, waited and knocked again, and again waited and listened. Receiving no invitation to enter, and hearing no sound within, she called softly, "Foxey!" The effect of that one word was magical, for within there immediately followed the sound of

some one hastily rising—the rustle of a newspaper, the approach of footsteps, and then the door swung noiselessly open. Before them stood a man holding a newspaper in his hand and smoking a cigar. He wore a dressing gown and slippers, had evidently just breakfasted and was enjoying his morning cigar and newspaper.

He was a very handsome man, rather above medium height, slender, yet of fine muscular development, while his features were regular, his complexion very fair and the flush of robust health mantled his cheeks. He had dark blue laughing eyes, and his blonde hair was cut short and brushed back from a very handsome forehead, and his long silken blonde mustache and imperial were waxed and twisted in the peculiar French style. His movements were quick and graceful and his manner that of one thoroughly world-wise. But beyond and below all this, there was a mysterious something about the man which impressed at first glance even the casual observer—a something which seemed stamped upon every feature and betrayed by every movement, saying “*I am a fast, foppish fraud.*”

A strong perfume of musk, almost stifling, pervaded the apartment, and to Jimmie, as he looked in through the open door, the cheerful fire in the grate was very inviting, and suggestive of a degree of comfort to which the poor child had ever been an utter stranger.

“Why, is it you, Jimmie?” inquired the man in a pleasant tone. What brought you here, and so early? come in, you look tired and cold.” As Jimmie passed into the room and approached the cheerful fire, which glowed and sputtered in the grate, Grube bowed

politely to the woman and thanked her, and as she disappeared in the darkness of the hall, he closed the door brought a chair for Jimmie, sat down in his easy cushioned arm rocker before the fire and said, "Well, Jimmie, what can I do for you?" In reply, the child simply delivered his uncle's message, which Grube perused attentively, after which he remained silent a few moments, during which he looked steadily into the mass of burning coal in the grate, and thus meditated audibly: "Wonder what the old villain wants of me? Singular, eight o'clock sharp, to-night. Hump! some rascality on hand, I'll wager. Some dirty work or foul wire-pulling to be done and wants a tool to use for that purpose. Don't like the idea, he's as dangerous as fire, keen as a razor, treacherous as an Indian and quite as heartless—and, to complete his character, I may add, that he is as mean as a hungry, yellow, cur dog. I will go, of course, but will keep my eyes and ears open, my tongue still, and shall think four or five times before I speak. Even then, if he don't trick me in some way I shall be exceedingly fortunate."

While Grube muttered his thoughts in disjointed sentences, barely audible, Jimmie was making a mental survey of the room. He was evidently delighted as he examined the elegant velvet carpet, the handsome carved walnut furniture, and the rare and beautiful pictures in massive frames on the wall. He looked attentively and wonderingly at the beautiful clusters of vines and choice blooming plants which adorned the bay window, and he was charmed by the sweet notes of the mocking bird in its gilded wire cage and with the gold fishes in the aquarium. His hitherto sad face, caught a new and strange light as he gazed, and his

glassy, sunken eyes borrowed expression from the beautiful things they beheld.

For the moment Foxey Grube had forgotten the boy, so absorbed was he by his own meditations, yet nominally he was conscious of his presence. In the very midst of his cogitations, Grube suddenly realized the boy's profound stillness, and looking around at him, caught the bewildered, enraptured expression of his face, and laughed outright. Jimmie started as though rudely awakened from a dream, flashed an inquiring glance toward Grube, and then as their eyes met, Jimmie blushed, glanced down at his old worn out shoes and tattered garments, clasped his hands together on his knees and bashfully twirled his thumbs.

"So you like the room, do you, Jimmie?" was Grube's laughing inquiry.

"Yes, sir; it is very beautiful," was the flattering reply, in a voice barely audible, while he rubbed his hands, twirled his thumbs nervously, and with face partly averted looked steadily into the fire.

"What is there about the room you like particularly?"

"Oh, sir, everything—the bird, the flowers, the beautiful gold fishes,"—he raised his face, glanced around the room wistfully, and added, "and the beautiful carpet, and furniture and pictures—and—and—" then came a pause, during which Grube puffed his fragrant Havana and Jimmie looked thoughtfully into the fire.

Finally Grube broke the silence, saying in a kind, reassuring tone, "Well, what else in the room do you admire? you said and—and"—

"The nice smell, sir."

At that Foxey Grube laughed immoderately, during which Jimmie continued to twirl his thumbs and watch the blaze of the burning coal as it curled gracefully up the chimney.

"Well, well, it is too bad, my little fellow," said Grube, regretfully, observing Jimmie's embarrassment, as he wiped the tears from his eyes on a strongly perfumed white silk handkerchief, "but don't mind my laughing; it is of no consequence whatever, and don't mean anything. Still," he continued in a subdued, confidential tone, as though addressing an imaginary third person, "it is really a joke on me, for the room is rather strongly perfumed." Then, raising his voice to its ordinary conversational tone, he added the affirmative inquiry, "Your uncle don't live quite as comfortably as I do, eh?"

"Oh, no sir!" was the quick, energetic reply. "Uncle says he can't afford to live comfortably, he is too poor."

"Jerusalem crickets—too poor!" exclaimed Grube, holding his sides as he laughed, chopping out between paroxysms, expressive adjectives not altogether free from profanity, and coupled to Skinner's name were in no degree complimentary or laudatory of his character or veracity. Grube's adjectives were so thoroughly mixed and scattering as to render his precise meaning and references matters of extreme uncertainty to the untrained ears and feeble understanding of his listener, who stared at him in blank amazement.

"So, your uncle is *poor*," said Grube, when sufficiently composed to speak intelligibly.

"Yes, sir; very poor," was the sad reply. "Uncle never has any money except what I earn, and he pays

all that out for something to eat, and sometimes when the weather is very cold and we have to use much coal, or when I find but few rags we have but little to eat."

Foxey Grube's face changed expression as the child discoursed in weak, plaintive tones. His reckless, don't-care demeanor gave place to a womanly sympathy and solicitude, and, as the boy paused and with a sigh looked again at the bright blaze as it curled up the chimney, Grube gazed pityingly on the wan, shriveled young face before him.

"Are you not sick often, Jimmie," inquired Grube, in a tone so altered and kind that the boy glanced up inquiringly, and, as their eyes met, felt an almost irresistible desire to run and put his arms around Grube's neck and kiss him.

Poor homeless, friendless child. It was the first kind, sympathetic words ever addressed to him, and his pure spirit went out in gratitude to the man who uttered them.

After a brief pause, and with much hesitation, Jimmie replied, "I don't know, sir; I feel badly here, all the time," placing his hand on his stomach, "that is, I feel sick there when we have little to eat, and that is very often."

Foxey Grube arose from his chair with flushed face and flashing eyes; a white circle came around his mouth, his nose was pinched, and his lips were drawn tightly and parted displaying two rows of glittering white teeth.

Without further noticing the frightened child who cowered down in his chair casting furtive glances over his shoulder, Foxey Grube began to walk the floor, and in a voice husky and tremulous with passion, mut-

tered horrible imprecations and shook his clinched hand furiously at some imaginary object. Finally, in the very midst of his pantomime and warlike demonstrations, a slight noise at the door attracted his attention, and, wheeling suddenly around, he saw Jimmie standing there with hand on the knob, trembling and looking back over his shoulder with a wild, startled look in his eyes.

Instantly Grube's demeanor changed—the fierce expression vanished from his face and a smile peculiarly winning came in its place.

“I must go now,” said the boy tremulously, “or I will get nothing to eat to-day, cau—cause Uncle said if I didn't hurry back I—I shouldn't have any; so I must go now; I've stayed too long already, I'm afraid.” The words came in broken, disjointed sentences, accompanied with sighs and looks that would have touched an iron heart and brought a flush of indignation to the face of a marble statue. Foxey Grube turned his back to the trembling child, ground his teeth together in rage, muttered a terrible oath—a curse deep and heartfelt, and then he turned around with face quite pleasant and natural, and said kindly, very, *very* kindly: “Wait a few minutes, I want to write a note to your uncle about the message you brought me. I'll tell him it was my fault you did not return sooner and he will excuse you. Sit down by the fire, dear.”

“*Dear!*” Was it the voice of Foxey Grube, or of the spirit of the child's angel mother? That sweet word was sweetly spoken, and if by Foxey Grube, an angel had put it into his mouth and inspired its articulation.

Reassured by the kind voice he had heard, and the gentle demeanor of Foxey Grube, Jimmie resumed his seat before the fire and soon again became interested in watching the burning coal in the grate and the curling blaze as it roared up the chimney.

As the boy returned to his seat, Grube pulled the bell cord vigorously and stood in a listening attitude until he heard footsteps in the hall, when he lighted a fresh cigar, leaned against the mantel and puffed out the pearly fragrant clouds of smoke, until above his head graceful wreaths swung and floated in fantastic circles. In that flash of time, an instant only, the pearly clouds became as vapor, in the midst of which floated an angel, clasping in her arms the form of a boy clad in rags, whose sad white face rested on her bosom. A moment only and it had vanished—even the smoke had disappeared, and as Grube glanced down, he saw Jimmie leaning back in his chair with clasped hands and face upturned and radiant.

A knock at the door broke the spell. A loud, rude knock, and then, in compliance with Grube's command to enter, the door slowly opened, a little way at first, a great black face peeped cautiously in, and two large black eyes glanced questioningly toward him.

"Come in, Lizzie," said Grube, kindly, and the door swung open and closed noiselessly, and a ponderous negro woman stood before him.

"Lizzie, have you served all the breakfast?" inquired Grube, to which inquiry the wench made no reply, but stood stupidly before him, gazing into his face with blank amazement portrayed on every lineament of her features. His tone of voice, his altered expression, his gentle manner, all in such vivid con-

trast with those of the same man but an hour before, had deprived her of the power of utterance or of motion, and she stood before him spellbound with astonishment.

"Lizzie, have you served all the breakfast?" he repeated, in the same gentle tone, and the wench pinched her cheek, winked her great black eyes as though she had just been aroused from dead slumber, and faltered forth the reply:

"No, sah."

"Is what you have good and hot, and is there plenty for a very hungry person?"

"Bless your soul, yes, sah; plenty for two hungry pussons, sah."

"Well, then, Lizzie, help me lift the aquarium off the table—steady—so!" he said, as it was done. "Now let us put the table over in front of the fire," and that was done. "Now, Lizzie," continued Grube, "serve the breakfast there on the table, and, remember, bring plenty."

"Yes, sah," and the woman hurried away. Soon she returned, accompanied by another servant, both loaded to their utmost capacity with crockery, table linen, silverware, and food so nicely cooked, so neatly served, that, in anticipation of it, a hungry stomach could not but laugh.

As the servants entered, Jimmie looked inquiringly at Grube, who reclined in his great easy chair, and with eyes half closed, puffed his cigar placidly. As he felt the boy's glance, he raised the newspaper which he held in his hand, so as to obscure his face, and seemed to be perusing it with deep interest.

The table was soon arranged, and very handsomely too, for choice china and silverware loaded with tempting food are things very pleasing to the eye. When all was in order, and the servants had left the room, in obedience to a gesture from Grube, he laid down his newspaper, arose from his chair, leisurely, and, standing before the fire, looked down on Jimmie's face, and asked, very kindly, "Have you been to breakfast, dear?"

"Dear!" In the same musical tone as before, but this time it was plainly enough the voice of Foxey Grube. Not the cold harsh voice of his natural self, with its precise measure, intonation and peculiar accent, but a new, rich, sweet-toned musical voice, for the deep, turbid pool of selfishness in his heart had suddenly gone dry, and the sweet spirit of sympathy had put a new song in his mouth.

Jimmie looked up into Grube's kind face, timidly, yet with eyes beaming with an expression of gratitude more eloquent than words, and answered, "No, sir, I—I haven't had any breakfast, that—that is *to-day*. We don't have any breakfast at all any how, for it is all breakfast and dinner and supper in one, and sometimes we don't even have that."

Jimmie was gazing steadily into the fire, and did not see the face above him, else he might have been frightened, for it was hideous at that moment, but when he did glance up a moment later, the boy saw only a very pleasant face.

"Well, Jimmie," said Grube, after a brief silence, "as you haven't had breakfast, and as that hungry man won't come, I presume, I think you had better take his place at the table there, for you must be

hungry after your long walk through the deep snow. Come, sit down here." Placing a chair at the table, Grube took Jimmie by the hand, seated him on the side next to the fire, and without further ceremony began piling his plate with food. There was a large tenderloin steak nicely done and smothered in butter, a large omelet browned to a dead bronze color, hot French rolls light and flakey, shoofly potatoes just right, cream toast—could not have better—and delicious golden coffee.

As a large piece of steak was placed on his plate, Jimmie siezed it with both hands and began devouring it ravenously while all human expression vanished from his eyes. He clawed and tore the meat, and even growled like a wild beast devouring its prey. Knife and fork were utterly ignored, and when the meat was gone, the boy stood up and clawed into the dishes right and left, with both hands, swallowing the food without chewing, and scattering fragments of it over the floor and tablecloth.

Foxey Grube was overwhelmed with astonishment. The fierce voraciousness of the starving child was hideous in the extreme; so shocking and disgusting to the last degree, that he recoiled from the contemplation of such abject misery, and left the child to claw the food and gorge himself like a famished beast, merely saying as he settled down in his easy chair, "Help yourself, Jimmie, it is all yours and more if you want." Then he fell to muttering bitter words, beating the arms of his chair with his clenched hands, and shaking his fists at an imaginary antagonist.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING LEO CASSELL.

Leo Cassell was needy and shabby, yet he managed to appear moderately genteel by dint of skillful maneuvering in the arrangement of his toilet and by other pardonable deceptions.

In order to impress his hearers with the fact of his entire solvency and business knowledge and skill, he would frequently indulge in casual remarks in reference to his excellent business prospects, and hint vaguely of large transactions in various commodities in which he was supposed to be financially interested. He talked glibly of stocks and bonds, and the fluctuations in values of grain, cotton, real estate, railway shares and gold, and hinted mysteriously of certain combinations of capitalists to produce corners in certain commodities, and then, taking his cigar from his mouth and blowing smoke through his nostrils, he would strangle, sneeze, and wipe the tears from his eyes on a large white silk handkerchief, highly perfumed with cheap cologne, and add, "and if I don't profit by the general demoralization that will follow it will not be *my* fault."

Yes, he was shabby and needy, sad to relate, notwithstanding his efforts to impress others, and even himself, with the belief that somewhere, in some bank of deposit, was a large sum of money subject to his sight draft. A never-failing source of gratification to him was the homage rendered by his equally needy

acquaintances, who did not possess the tact to enable them to disguise the true condition of their finances under rose-tinted shadows of fiction, and he walked the earth with proud step and stately tread, surrounded by a halo of harmless fictions, pleasant illusions and bright anticipations. It is a matter of grave doubt whether he ever reflected seriously, for that was by no means to him a pleasant occupation. It would doubtless have been profitable, inasmuch as there were latent qualities of intellect and physical force within him which might have been utilized thereby, and astonishing actual, instead of imaginary, results attained. But, as before remarked, it was not pleasant to reflect soberly and act consistently, and so he floated along on the high tide of his own imaginings, though buffeted by misfortune, scourged by disappointment, and sorely pinched by want. Had he devoted as much tact and energy in molding realities to his use and benefit as in striving to disguise his poverty, he would doubtless have been the fortunate possessor of a competency with all the adjuncts which the word implies. Instead of being compelled to sponge his clothes almost daily to tone down the gloss of their worn surface, and to ink the seams and binding of his coat to disguise the effects of long wear and vigorous scouring and brushing; instead of being compelled to blacken freely the cracks in his shoes to hide the openings betrayed by white socks or patches of bare feet; instead of being compelled to change his boarding place at the close of every week, and to skulk around corners and through unfrequented by-ways in order to avoid importunate creditors; instead of being compelled to attend free luncheon at out-of-the-way beer

saloons, or make a very thin soup answer to the demands of an empty stomach for a whole day, simply because he had forgotten to get that thousand-dollar bill changed before bank closed, leaving him with but a lonely five-cent piece, and that borrowed from a needy friend; instead of struggling and suffering through all this, he might have worn a hundred-dollar suit of clothes, a twenty-dollar pair of boots, and been honored as the lord and master of a Michigan Avenue mansion, and might have been well kept and enjoyed all the comforts and luxuries of life, had he but bravely grasped realities and banished dreams. But why moralize? He floated on in the same surging tide, meeting disaster with a calm indifference amounting almost to heroism, and he chattered, bustled and talked millions, even while he lived on stray pennies. People attributed his shabbiness to eccentricity and habits of rigid economy, and his failure to pay his debts to a miserly disposition to retain in his possession for purposes of speculation the money he justly owed. Ah me, how far astray everybody was in reference to his peculiarities! Nobody ever accused him of downright dishonesty, for truly the fellow was brimful of good intentions and never purposely wronged anybody; but his peculiarities led him unwillingly astray, and he was ever the victim of untoward circumstances. Well does the author remember the ludicrous peculiarities of Leo Cassell, and if in delineating them he becomes in any degree tedious through very minuteness, the reader must pardon the digression from the thread of the narrative and cast "the mantle of charity" over the seeming inconsistency when the author explains that he loves to dwell upon the incidents of the long ago

and toy even with the faults and foibles of his dear friend.

Although appearances were very much against him, Leo Cassell was "the soul of honor." Even his enemies (and what positive character has not enemies? for show me a man without them and I will show *you* a man without force of character)—even his enemies gave him the credit of being industrious and enterprising, and of possessing an inordinate degree of energy. As regards the latter, he seemed always to have some pressing business engagement, and during business hours could scarcely be held a moment in ordinary conversation. As he passed along the street he always ran, knocking against sluggish people sauntering along the pavement, and creating panics in knots of insolent, swaggering, sleek, smooth-faced, would-be-fashionable loungers on street corners, for Cassell invariably went straight through the knots, parting them as a deep-sea diver displaces water, demoralizing hats and disarranging neck-ties in a most reckless manner. But, the fact is, the fellow never had any but imaginary business, and his energetic movements were simply the results of his efforts to work off superfluous energy. Independent of his little harmless fictions in reference to his own business transactions—harmless, because he never for a moment ever dreamed of turning them to personal profit—by gaining any business advantages, by creating false impressions in relation to his financial expectations or condition; aside from this he was extremely conscientious and sensitive in relation to truth, plain and unvarnished, particularly in all matters in any degree effecting the business interests, private character or personal well-being of others.

However, he was not altogether without occupation, for absolute idleness was not consistent with his warm, nervous temperament. He could not have endured the indolent repose so agreeable to phlegmatic temperaments, and so some kind of employment was absolutely essential to his existence. Being honest, it was necessary that he should be able to realize something from the labor of his hands or brain, else he would have starved, being in no degree what is vulgarly termed "a beat." And so, and somehow, he had quietly managed to work into a little manufacturing business that yielded him but a beggarly and extremely uncertain income, even when the most prosperous. But there were months following months in dreary, monotonous and almost hopeless succession, during which he realized scarcely a penny, and then he starved and grew thin, existing almost wholly on his mental force and physical vitality. Nobody knew precisely just how he drifted into the business, for it was extremely unpleasant and laborious. He did all the work, was office boy, porter, bookkeeper, salesman and proprietor, collectively and individually. He did all the work, ground himself down under the severest toil during the night, and morning and evening hovered around the suburbs of the city in energetic but vain endeavors to sell to out-of-the-way grocers and small druggists the article of his manufacture.

His workshop and sleeping apartment was situated on a dark narrow alley, in an old partially abandoned building, from the front windows of which he could look out over the river to the dull smoke-begrimed fronts of the tall buildings on the opposite wharf. The river crowded with shipping, and the wharves with mer-

chandise of every description and people of every nationality, occupation, stature and variety of apparel, presented in summer a lively and interesting scene, but in winter, when the city's great commercial artery was converted into a trough of solid ice, the scene was one of dreary monotony, where silence brooded and the veering winds piled up mountains of snow.

But the view never troubled or interested Cassell in the least, for he rarely took time to look. Time was precious to him, for, between morbid fancies and pinching realities, the scourgings of grinding miserable want, and the inspiration and hounding on of ambition without the faintest shadow of a plan, or an outline of the object to be attained, he found no time for the idle contemplation of any scene or object, and so he pursued the dull routine of his nightly toil and "daily walk and conversation," being quite content to let "the world wag" its own way while he tottered his.

The floor of his room was covered with coal ashes, paper cuttings, stray straws, old sacks, pieces of kindling wood, old tin cans, and a general assortment of dirt and rubbish; and an old cracked and burned-out stove, a dilapidated office chair, and an old wooden water bucket, completed the furniture of the apartment. As to his bed, it consisted of a quantity of the material he used for manufacturing purposes, which, covered with some old gunny sacks, cast-off clothing, and several old blankets of doubtful age and cleanliness, was in perfect keeping with its surroundings.

He never paid rent, for the very good reason that he did not have the money, and his landlord, who at first had been persistent in his demands and receiving nothing, eventually accepted from time to time, to be

applied on account, the few pennies which Cassell could obtain, but he wore out too many pens in writing receipts therefor, and, as the building gradually fell to decay and became tenantless by reason of its unsafe condition, he either forgot the lone occupant of the upper front room, or, learning to regard him as a kind of harmless nuisance, concluded to let him drift along rent free.

Leo Cassell awoke late that cold New-Year's morning, awoke with a grunt and shiver, and peeping cautiously out from under the ragged border of his covering, toward the frosty windows veiled by cob-webs and begrimed by dirt, and then at the cold stove, the empty coal bucket, and the pail of water frozen solid to the bottom. These were by no means pleasant objects to look at, nor was the act of rising from that bed into the freezing atmosphere in any degree agreeable to anticipate. His cringings, shiverings and hesitations were numerous and ludicrous, and his disjointed mutterings about the empty coal bucket, the stinging cold weather and his thin clothing would have excited the mirth and commiseration of any listener, however disinterested. He would rise partly out of bed, shiver, hesitate, and then cower down again with chattering teeth, blue lips, red nose and watery eyes, ducking his head under the covering and tucking himself snugly in again. This skirmishing with the inevitable was continued until Jack Frost became master of the situation and drove him forth from his retreat. Every time he essayed to rise, so undecided and feeble were his movements, that he invariably met with signal repulse and retired, nipped, pinched and stung, every time the more thoroughly vanquished.

Finally he was literally driven forth, there being under the bed clothes but a trifle more warmth than without, and scrambling to his feet he hurried on his clothes, seized an empty coal bucket and rushed out of the room down stairs and away to a neighboring coal yard. A few minutes thereafter he returned puffing and panting, carrying a large lump of coal under one arm and in the other hand the bucket heaped full of small lumps. Depositing all on the floor beside the stove, he began vigorously poking at the grate to remove the ashes, and a few moments later a fire was lighted and soon the old stove became red with heat. Then he went to an old box which he used as a trunk, poked around among the contents until he found a razor and shaving cup, heated some water in an oyster can and then sat down close by the stove and began to shave. The process was exceedingly tedious and dangerous, inasmuch as he was compelled to perform the operation entirely by the sense of feeling, having no looking glass. The razor was horribly dull, and it was a process of plucking instead of cutting beard. These difficulties, added to an unsteady hand, rendered the operation exceedingly painful and tedious, but it was accomplished without accident, although his face was scarlet, scratched and sore. Then he arose, washed his face, neck and hands, wiped them on a very crash towel, rubbing vigorously until his flesh glowed under the energetic friction, and then he took up his worn coat, found a bottle of ink and a pencil brush and began inking the binding and seams. Half an hour later he was dressed, brushed and smoothed as usual, when he ventured to appear in public, and as he stood before the stove giving the binding of his coat a part-

ing touch of ink, he was quite good looking. Certainly his regular features, dark-blue expressive eyes, large and finely shaped head crowned by a wealth of glossy golden hair in tiny curls could not be fairly regarded as even ordinary, and as Cassell completed the inking operation and stood by the stove, hat in hand, thinking about New-Year's calls, he was moderately handsome.

"Not many places to go," he said, "at least not many where I would dare to appear in this suit. Let me see, Browns, Dodges, Bells, Hurleys, Evanses, Merryfellows and—and that completes the list. No, Worshams. I have no desire to neglect them even if they can't furnish cake and wine." He put on his hat, turned up the collar of his overcoat, buttoned it up to his chin, thrust his hands into the pockets and hurried away. The frosty outdoor air tingled his cheeks, and nipped his nose and ears, and the streets seemed to draw currents of air as chimneys do smoke, and the snow-drifts impeded his progress, soiled his boots, through the openings of which fine snow sifted and frost entered and pinched his toes, but he rushed along regardless of all—wind, snow and leaky boots, for there were warmth, cake, wine and pleasant greetings in prospect, and a smile played warmly on his lips, and would not retire though the frosty air endeavored to freeze it into a stereotyped grin.

Square after square and mile on mile he floundered along, until in the West Side suburbs of the city he met an acquaintance, also out making New-Year's calls. At once they became boon companions, and so remained until the Browns, Dodges, Bells, Hurleys and Evanses had been duly honored by their greeting—made happy by a profusion of "gush"—which the occasion

and a plentiful supply of wine "with a fly in it" always engenders. However, when Cassell and his needy and seedy friend had completed the list of calls, originally proposed—their councils became turbulent and confused, the friend insisting on calling at certain other places, and Cassell strenuously objecting.

Ah, how vividly the author recalls to mind this ludicrous incident, and as he makes a record of it here for the amusement of his readers, he laughs heartily, even until his eyes are so blinded by tears that he can scarcely see the lines.

However, after much deliberation, quibbling, proposals and counter proposals, the conference adjourned *sine die*, after agreeing to disagree on the main issues, and each humor his own inclinations. And so they parted, albeit good-humoredly, after many gushing professions of undying friendship and mutual invocations of the smiles of the fickle goddess; after prayers had been said by each for the health, happiness, prosperity and long life of the other—while they clung to and held up a lamp-post on an out-of-the-way corner, as they stood knee-deep in snow, they fell upon each other's necks, sighed, wept and parted.

Leo Cassell ran. It was his only alternative, for his head was heavy and his feet exceedingly light. He was cold, also, and rapid locomotion quickened his blood and induced warmth; on he sped, regardless of direction, bringing up against fences, lamp-posts, trees, and buildings like an animal with the blind staggers, and each time trying a new direction, until finally the outskirts of the city had been left far behind, and the plank road to Brighton stretched out before him far to the dim horizon. Gradually he became Leo Cassell

again, for the fog which had settled down darkly upon his brain was swept away by the piercing cold and violent exercise, and he retraced his steps cogitating the while on the unwholesomeness of "wine with a fly in it." However his heart was light and his reasoning powers in very fair working order, and so, as he came to the corner where the conference had been held, he had mapped out his course for the balance of the day, and hurried by merely glancing at the footprints beside the lamp-post and numerous impressions of a human form in the snow in the direction his friend had gone.

Half an hour later he rang the door bell of a very handsome dwelling on a beautiful street in an aristocratic quarter of the city, and was ushered into a beautiful parlor by a beautiful woman, even Mrs. Dolly Merryfellow.

As Cassell entered, Merryfellow came bounding in from the sitting-room, caught his friend by the shoulders, twirled him around, grasped his hand and warmly welcomed him. Then "the compliments of the season," and mutual kind wishes each for the other passed in rapid succession, and then came the rattle of cut glass and the flow of wine (minus flies, for Cassell would have no more of it), and sparkling Mrs. Merryfellow with charming grace dispensed the hospitalities and honored the visitor by the sunlight of her sweet presence. A warm friendship existed between these two men—Cassell and Merryfellow—a friendship which began when they were boys and playmates, and became stronger and more enduring as the years went by. Cassell had never failed to visit his friend on the first day of every year, when there was a general love feast and overhauling of the pleasant memories of the

past. That was the first New-Year's day since little Dolly Minton became the charming Mrs. Merryfellow, and as it was especially in order to congratulate the happy "twain, one flesh," Cassell improved the opportunity and performed the pleasant but exceedingly delicate task in a manner quite graceful and in words well chosen.

At that moment, in the little cottage across the way, two ladies knelt in prayer lifting their hearts in gratitude to God. In the center of the room was a large box with the lid partially removed disclosing the contents—a large turkey, canned fruits, cans of oysters, jars of preserves and pickles, nuts and confections, and on the floor beside that box was an open letter stained and moist with tears. Even as Rudolph Merryfellow, thrilling with emotion, received the congratulations of his dear friend, the trembling voice of that aged lady over the way besought heaven's choicest blessings on those kind unknown friends, who, even in the height of prosperity, and in the rose-tinted light of pure fresh love, had remembered the indigent widow and orphan and had contributed to their comfort, that they might also be happy on the first day of the new year.

Leo Cassell reluctantly endeavored to frame an acceptable excuse not to run into dinner, but signally failed, and surrendered unconditionally. Merryfellow put down his number ten boot with such force and determination, and Mrs. Merryfellow smiled so sweetly as she seconded her husband's invitation, that Cassell waived his exceedingly transparent objections and consented to become an honored guest at a bounteous repast. His hitherto complaining stomach was more than satisfied when they returned to the parlor, and

the choice fragrant cigars which Merryfellow had especially provided for the occasion were keenly enjoyed. And so the hours flitted by until night shadows came creeping, phantom like, over the lake and along the streets of the great city, and lights began to flash from windows, and street-lamps glimmered faintly in the gathering gloom. Then hands were warmly clasped in parting, adieus were said, and the door of Merryfellow's happy home closed behind Cassell. He walked slowly away, slowly! yes, that is the term descriptive of his shuffling, shambling gait, and irresolute movements. He cast wistful sidelong glances over his shoulder toward the light which gleamed brightly from the windows of the cottage across the way, and he wanted to go there. Yes, he had half a mind to venture, but was painfully uncertain as to the propriety of so doing. His heart throbbed violently, his knees knocked together and a nervous tremor shook him, and so, away from the light which bathed loveliness and purity, he went slowly, very slowly, while the little winsome love god tugged away at his heart strings in frantic opposition, striving to draw him toward the light and into the presence of angelic loveliness in human guise, that he might get in range two sympathetic hearts, and with his keen polished arrow, thrown by an unerring bow, pin them together.

Cassell paused and leaned against a lamp-post on the opposite corner, half a square distant from that fascinating light; leaned and hesitated, shivered and blew his breath on his naked hands, scratched his head, stamped his feet, and, still gazing toward the light, muttered something about "confound a man with no nerve." Finally, between the stinging cold

and his ardent inclinations, he was driven from his untenable position of indecision, and in very desperation he sprang forward and hurried across the street and along the pavement until he came to the door of the cottage where he paused, and, with trembling, hesitating hand, gave the bell-pull a gentle touch. Immediately a bell rang faintly within, and presently light footsteps glided along the hall toward the door. Mercy! how wildly his heart throbbed and pulse bounded, and the muscles of his face twitched, and how he trembled from head to feet. Had a sudden illness seized him, and was his over-burdened stomach in rebellion? Had the wine "with a fly in it," and that without a fly—absolutely straight—become involved in a sanguinary conflict with the hot punch which his friend, Merryfellow, had especially prepared for him, and absolutely forced him to swallow? Why did he shrink back from the door as though about to retreat? Strange! Poor fellow, he was sadly demoralized. The echo of a pair of dainty feet in number two gaiters had quite unmanned him, and he was in a flutter of varied emotions when the door softly opened and a very handsome girl stood before him with extended hand and smiling an eloquent welcome.

She was a blonde of the clearest and most positive type. Laughing blue eyes, shaded by delicately arched and penciled brows, looked a joyous greeting which made Cassell's blood tingle to his very finger ends. That she was fair, no honest beholder could deny nor remain totally indifferent to her many subtle, winsome charms. If a form delicately molded and chiseled into exquisite perfection by the great sculptor, nature, and endowed with a quality of motion as

graceful as the swaying willow; if a complexion of blended pearl and rose tints with bright vermilion on lips, full and ripe, above a chin so exquisitely rounded that the little love god as he paused to admire, had touched it with his finger and left a dimple there—if these harmonious combinations of curved lines and delicate tints constitute beauty, then Grace Worsham was beautiful.

Eagerly he grasped her proffered hand, stammered, blushed, and tried to speak, but his mouth and throat were dry, his tongue paralyzed, and his lips joy sealed.

Beyond an informal interchange of incoherent greetings, no words were spoken until in the quietness of the plain sitting-room, and in the presence of Mrs. Worsham, they were seated before a cheerful fire. Then Cassell's shackled words broke their bonds, his paralyzed tongue accepted joyfully its freedom, and he laughed and talked incessantly.

His visit was quite agreeable to the lonely ladies, who were glad to listen to his light chattering, and so the hours danced along until the great bells of the city chimed eight. Then he arose, announced an important engagement, put on his overcoat, shook Mrs. Worsham's hand warmly, and passed into the hall, attended by Miss Grace. As he stood alone in her presence by the hall door, his self-possession vanished, and the timidity of a schoolboy in the presence of his first sweetheart, came in its place. Evidently he wanted to say something confidentially to the little beauty by his side, but her very purity of thought and modest demeanor overwhelmed him with confusion, and after numerous hesitations and awkward intervals of silence, he went away

without even an intimation of the character of the communication he wished to impart. However, her womanly perception fathomed the secret, and brought clearly to her understanding the cause of his confusion, and with a smile which sent the warm blood rushing through his veins with electric force and speed, she held his hand a moment, and pressed it gently as adieux were said. Ah, woman, woman! from Eve to our last sweetheart your nature has undergone no change.

The gentle pressure of Grace Worsham's hand raised Leo Cassell from "the slough of despond" up into the very center of the seventh heaven, and as the door closed behind him he walked on air, wrapped in delightful bewilderment. Yes, the gentle pressure of a soft, warm hand had set his blood on fire, and his heart and pulses dancing. He swooped along like an æronaut in his air-ship, utterly blind to surrounding objects, by glimmering street lamps and squares of stately mansions, over the bridge which spanned the ice-locked river, by markets and tall business houses, dark and silent, until—ah, bump! slip! thud! and two human forms plunge headlong into the snow. It was fortunate that the earth was well cushioned just there, else broken bones or dislocated limbs might have resulted from that violent collision. Howbeit, the only damages resulting were huge rents in both knees of Cassell's best and only pants, and the slight soiling of the other person's coat. The collision occurred at a street corner where there was no light, and tall buildings shrouded the pavement in pitchy darkness. And so, as Cassell, going at a full run, turned the corner of the street sharply, he came in violent contact with the other party approaching from the opposite direction. As that individual scrambled

to his feet, he indulged in some very emphatic comments on Cassell's carelessness and wanton disregard of his (the complainant's) right of way. He protested strenuously against such monopoly of the public thoroughfare, and insisted that there was ample space for a dozen persons to pass without the slightest danger of collision, and freely expressed his opinion in reference to Cassell's mental endowments—in conclusion consigned Cassell to the realm of eternal night, to float in the burning lake until summoned to judgment by the awful notes of Gabriel's trumpet. Then he advanced, shaking his fist threateningly at Cassell, who, with back against the brick wall of the building, placed himself in an attitude of defense, and defied the belligerent stranger to do his worst.

Cassell's blood was up quite to the boiling point, and he was crazed by anger, else he would have recognized the voice of Foxey Grube. That individual paused as Cassell's defiant challenge to combat rang out clear as bugle notes sounding a charge—paused, and his demeanor instantly changed as he recognized the voice of his boyhood friend. True, vice had opened a chasm between them wide and deep, for Grube had settled down into the quagmire of sin, while Cassell, though ground down by poverty, still remained on the heights, breathing the pure atmosphere and clinging tenaciously to honor. Howbeit, for the moment the chasm was bridged, and instead of blows and blood, there was a warm clasping of hands as Edward Grube discovered himself to his boyhood school-fellow and friend.

Standing in darkness and silence, hand in hand, those two men lived a moment in the joyous sunny past, and

then, with a simple good-bye, uttered in tremulous accents, they parted.

Leo Cassell did not see the form standing in the darkness of a deep doorway across the street. He did not know that the same form had followed him from the very door where he had parted with Grace Worsham. He had not the slightest suspicion of being shadowed, as with a sad heart he slowly pursued his lonely way toward his lonely habitation. Nevertheless, that form continued to follow stealthily, avoiding the glaring light of street lamps and keeping in the shadows of the buildings, until Cassell turned into the dark hallway leading to his room. Then that form paused under the light of a street lamp, and, though he wore a soft felt hat, with its brim slouched down, partially shading his face, and a wide fur muffler around his neck, extending above his ears, a mere casual acquaintance passing at that moment could not have failed to have recognized the form as that of *Charles Barry*.

CHAPTER VII.

LITTLE JIM'S PROPHEMIC DREAM.

Ralph Skinner was seated in his strong arm chair, close by that heat-proof stove, in which a feeble coal fire sputtered discontentedly, threatening momentarily to strike for better nursing and more food. That fire complained in plaintive tones of the large lumps which had been crowded into its stomach, and positively declared its inability to digest them. It insisted on having its food properly served, that it might be easily consumed, and on having its throat cleared, that it might be able to breathe freely, else it would perform no service. "Depend on it," quoth the stove, "I will no longer endure such ill-treatment."

To those very reasonable and just demands, Ralph Skinner was totally indifferent. He had served the fuel in large masses purposely, from motives of economy. That was always the master rudder which guided and controlled his acts, and so his determination to compel that stove, yes or no, to digest its stomach load, just as he had served it, slate, sulphur lumps and all, was unalterable; and it only remained for that mutinous stove to sputter and complain, congratulating itself upon the fact that its miserly lord and master would receive no benefit whatever from its services.

A miserable spindling tallow dip crowded down into the neck of a dirty soda bottle also sputtered complainingly from its place on the old greasy table,

casting a faint firefly light but a few inches from its burning wick on which had gathered numerous signs of letters in the postoffice for its owner.

Except close around the table, which had been drawn out in front of the stove, the room was in total darkness, and as old Ralph Skinner leaned forward toward the sickly sputtering light, holding up a sheet of legal cap writing paper, and for the twentieth time perused the writing scrawled on its polished surface, in the wanly light of the tallow dip, the deep lines, curves and sharp angular depressions on the leather-like surface of his face, over which alternate light and shadow flitted as he changed position, was an object ghastly and repulsive.

Little Jim had sought release from sorrow, suffering and toil, and was away in beautiful dreamland, unconscious of the squalid misery which clung to his young life, vampire-like, slowly sapping the fountain of his strength and surely crushing his spirit. As the shadows of night began to assemble, flitting into deep doorways, walled courts, narrow alleys and the angles of tall buildings, the weary child had crept under the ragged quilts on the bed, and, as he lay there, thinking of Foxey Grube and the good breakfast which that person had kindly given him, the wind moaned sadly around the corners and gables of the attic and seemed to sob like a weeping woman, at the window close by his bed. As he listened, a delightful languor gradually came upon him—his eyes closed slowly, and strains of soft sweet distant music echoed in his ears. Suddenly a scene of bewildering beauty burst upon his vision and he almost ceased to breathe.

He was in a strange and beautiful land where tall mountains of pure crystal towered heavenward, and disappeared in clouds of purple and gold. There were beautiful valleys nestling at the feet of the mountains, where beautiful flowers bloomed, lifting their glad faces upward and waving their green leaves in the golden light; kissed by wooing breezes they blushed and quivered, and the loving zephyrs sported among them and away, laden with their delicious perfume. Fountains played in the shimmering light, and clear, deep streams went murmuring by, and even the earth seemed to rejoice and shout hosannas.

And just beyond was a great forest of giant trees, to whose swaying branches clung masses of flowering vines in beautiful wreaths, forming natural arbors, in whose deep shade flitted, to and fro, forms of transcendent loveliness. He heard sounds of rejoicing, shouts of triumph and peals of music, and myriads of birds of gorgeous plumage floated aloft, singing with human voices.

He stood upon a shore, and the surf thundered at his feet, drenching him with spray, and over the water hung a dark impenetrable mist, which stood like a dark wall before his vision. He could hear the suck and thud of angry waves, and their regular dash on shore. He could hear the dripping of paddles in water, and the grating of boat-keels on a beach, and out of the mist came shadowy human forms, whose heads were encircled by crowns of dazzling light.

Suddenly he felt a mysterious presence—the embrace of loving arms, and then he lay on a soft, white bosom, and the face of his angel mother smiled down upon him.

"Darling," she said, "*My darling*, my sweet boy—poor, suffering, dear one, you have come to mamma at last, pretty one, but you can not remain. Life clings to you still, and you must pass the gates of death and float over the dark river ere you can rest here in my arms forever. Patience, my darling, patience. A few more feeble steps, a few more weary hours, a few more grains of sand dropping from the glass of time; a few more sighs and tears, temptations and cruel wrongs, and then, my darling, you will be mine—all mine, forever."

Crash! She was gone. The beautiful scene vanished like vapor before a tornado, and the startled, terror-stricken child screamed, clutched the bed-clothes and trembled as the sound of a harsh, horrible, yet familiar voice greeted his ears.

He sat up, and there before him was a form and face at which he could never look and not shudder. Tears flowed down his face, as reality, with cruel hand, swept away the joy of his sweet dream and led him back to the horrors of life.

"What is the matter with you? idiot!" growled old Skinner, glaring fiercely toward the trembling child. "What are you screeching about? Lie down will you, and don't let me hear from you again to-night, or I'll warm your back with a strap. I knocked down the poker, that was all; but you don't need to screech about it and alarm the whole neighborhood." Then old Skinner fell to mumbling and grunting like a hog disturbed in its rest.

"Suddenly he paused and listened. What did he hear? His quick ears had caught a sound, and he sat still, clasping the arms of his chair with a vice-like grip

of his bony hands, gazing through the darkness toward the door.

Thump! Thump! Thump! Was it footsteps on the lower stairs? Tramp! tramp! up! up! nearer and nearer; a brief interval of death-like stillness, and then there came a loud rap on the door.

"Come in," entreated Skinner in a weak, quivering voice, while his teeth knocked together and he trembled as though a sudden ague had seized him. Still clutching the arms of his chair, he partly arose to his feet, and again endeavored to speak, but his voice was for the moment gone, and he crouched there, ducking up and down like one demented.

Ah, conscience, what an avenger thou art! How thou canst scourge the evil doer with the scorpion lash of apprehension. What perturbation overwhelms the guilty soul at the slightest sound when no danger threatens!

There was a brief interval of profound silence, during which old Skinner ducked up and down in his chair, and the muscles of his face twitched and his shriveled features contorted frightfully. His long white hair dropped down from his forehead over his eyes, and his old brass-framed spectacles slipped from his nose and fell to the floor, breaking into many pieces.

Again that knock at the door, but louder than at first, sounded through the room, rattled along the roof timbers and angles of the great attic beyond, and came back in wild echoes as though ten thousand fiends had shrieked in chorus, *Ralph Skinner!*

The police officer who stood under the light of a street lamp a square distant, heard the sound, and sprang his alarm rattle, and as his companion approached both paused and listened.

"Come in!" shrieked Skinner, in a shrill, unsteady treble voice. The police officers heard that also, smiled and parted, for well they knew old Skinner's screech.

In compliance with the invitation, Foxey Grube strode in, slammed the door behind him two or three times, until the worn-out catch fastened, and then he approached the cowering form of old Skinner and said, "Well, I am here as you requested."

"So I observe," growled Skinner, "but I fail to recognize the necessity for so much noise, or that you needed to break down the door in order to get in—it wasn't locked."

"Why didn't you answer then," retorted Grube.

"I did answer," snapped Skinner.

"You must have very weak lungs then, for I didn't hear you."

"That settles it," was Skinner's curt reply. "Yes," he added, insolently, "I want you, else I wouldn't have sent word to that effect."

"Haven't you been drinking vinegar this evening, old man?" inquired Grube, as a white circle crept around his mouth.

The quick eyes of the other caught the fiendish expression on Grube's face, and he quailed like a dog before the angry glance of a determined man. Instantly old Skinner's demeanor changed, and his haughty defiance became sickening, fawning, disgusting sycophancy.

"He-he-he! giggled the cringing mortal. Ha-ha-ha! that is a good joke. No, my good fellow, no vinegar for Skinner, if you please. But tell me, haven't you been eating mustard or capsicum?"

"Hit him again," responded Grube, as the white circle around his mouth disappeared, and a faint smile lighted up his face.

"A truce," whined Skinner with a horrible leer, "and now, my dear boy, let me inquire how have you spent the day? Enjoyed yourself hugely with the—he-he—he! you know who, the ha-ha-ha! the sweet pretty girls. Had plenty of wine and cake?" Here his voice fell to a horrible whisper, a fiendish hiss, and waving his bony right hand before him in deprecating gesture, accompanied by sundry nods and winks, he added, "and something stronger, something hotter, something that makes the blood gush through the veins like liquid fire, quickens thought and breeds purposes—ah—?"

"But always evil purposes," responded Grube, breaking in upon Skinner's discourse. "Enough of that," he added, waving his hand in dismissal, "quite enough, I know what you mean, it is that which will destroy both body and soul and even convert an angel into a very devil. Liquor, whiskey, brandy! No sir, I haven't imbibed to-day."

"But this is New-Year's day," fawned Skinner.

"I presume I ought to know that, as I have enjoyed the occasion in my own quiet way," was the grim answer. "But that has no bearing on the matter which brought me here, what do you want of me?"

"I'm coming to that presently," replied Skinner, "a book usually has a dedication and a preface, and so should all important business matters. Such preparatory exercises I have arranged for this occasion." Reaching down to the floor by the side of his chair, he lifted up a one-gallon demijohn and a broken wine

glass, adding as he removed the cork, filled the glass and handed it to Grube, "it is the best I could find, pure old brandy."

Grube smiled as he took the glass from Skinner's hand, smiled all over his face, and even his head, by its peculiar poise, seemed also to smile.

"Not an unpleasant preface, quite an appropriate dedication, Skinner," he said. "It is always wise to fortify the stomach when the brain is at war with circumstances, endeavoring to influence acts so as to mold results to one's liking. We may be making history for ought we know, at least history of individual lives, and as neither of us are in any degree saintly, our councils can not result in good to our fellow-man. The reasonable presumption therefore is, that some sort of questionable wire-pulling is contemplated, which means—well never mind what." Taking out his pocket-book he shook it significantly at Skinner, nodded several times, implying, "you understand all about it, and so do I," returned it to his pocket, adding in a bantering tone, "something of that sort it means, by the simple twist of the wrist you know." Continuing to nod and wag his head, he raised the glass, held it a moment before the thin tallow dip, closed one eye, and with the other squinted through the amber colored liquid and said, while in the act of placing it to his lips, "all circumstances and surroundings duly considered this is a very appropriate dedication, for evil spirits and evil deeds ever go hand in hand." Then he seemed to pour the liquor down his throat, and really Skinner so believed, for so delighted was he by the apparent success of his scheme, that he turned his head away at that moment, and did not see Grube's quick

movement as he took the glass from his lips, nor did he hear the gentle splash of something on the floor. However, Grube smacked his lips as he put the glass on the table and twirled it around, saying, "that *is* good brandy, Skinner, excellent quality, smooth as oil, a pure article, imported from sunny France, doubtless."

While Grube was speaking, Skinner leaned over sidewise in his chair and felt around on the floor, found another wine-glass, the exact counterpart of the first, poured into it from the demijohn perhaps two teaspoonfuls of brandy, and as Grube concluded, he nodded approvingly, while a grim smile played among the wrinkles of his face. His glance was downward and aside, for he could not meet the eyes of his visitor, and so he drank in silence.

"Yes, it is choice old brandy, and as you say, smooth as oil," responded Skinner, as he put his empty glass on the table, and shuddered perceptibly, for he did not like the vile stuff. Not only was it disagreeable to his taste, but it wounded his *conscience*, and in retaliation it smote him mercilessly for the useless waste. And yet there was a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes as he narrowly watched the movements of his visitor. Strange as it may appear, there were no dregs in the bottom of Skinner's glass, something remarkable, as both glasses had been filled from the same demijohn. *Had ashes accidentally fallen into Grube's glass.*

That person grew wonderfully talkative and good-humored, discussed every imaginable subject from beans to bonds, and his fund of information seemed simply inexhaustible, as did his tongue. He rattled along glibly, asking questions and answering them himself in the same breath, was wonderfully polite,

suave and Frenchy. He discoursed to imaginary generals, colonels, senators, lawyers and doctors on the arts of war, law making, law manipulation and physics in infinite variety and inextricable confusion of subjects and ideas.

Meanwhile Skinner seemed deeply interested in the writing on the sheet of legal cap paper on the table, and was evidently deaf to Grubes' nonsensical twaddle. Finally he began to write on another sheet of paper, while Grube continued to dance around the room, quote poetry, make speeches and sing. He hovered over Skinner, as he wrote, danced around his chair and looked over his shoulder, and once, when the other looked up, he caught an expression of peculiar intelligence in his eyes, considering that he was almost blind drunk. So regarding him, Skinner gave the matter no further thought, and so an hour passed, when he laid down his pen, turned his chair around from the table and said :

"Now, Mr. Grube, suppose we talk business a few minutes. We have enjoyed ourselves exceedingly, have cast aside the cares and vexations of life for a time, and enjoyed the society of our friends. We have drained the blushing goblet and soared away on the wings of fancy, which for the time was very pleasant indeed. But all transitory things are at best unsatisfactory—even life—but as we must live until we die, we must be resigned to whatever overtakes us on the journey—prosperity and adversity alike. Speaking of changes, I presume it will be well enough now to change the order of the evening, and if agreeable to you, Sir Knight, we'll to business."

Grube, who, when Skinner began, was in the midst of Hamlet's soliloquy, and had just uttered the words, "but that the dread of something after death"—when Skinner ended, arose to his feet, bowed, and replied, "May it please your Majesty, I have the honor to be your most humble and obedient servant, and respectfully await your pleasure." Then he bowed very low again, gave a military salute and assumed the position of a soldier in the ranks at the command—"Front." He appeared to be entirely serious, and his grave expression and manner brought a smile even to the face of old Ralph Skinner.

"It is well, Sir Knight," responded Skinner, humoring the other's whim, "but let us come down to facts now, and talk of the matter about which I wished to see you particularly. You remember I sent for you to-day."

"Yes," replied Grube, dreamily, seeming partially to realize the situation.

"Well," continued Skinner, "this being New-Year's night, I concluded to have a little jollification, and also to combine business with pleasure, so that the time would not be entirely lost. I have some papers here which I wish you to sign as witness. The notary will be here presently, and he—he—he—just for a joke, I will introduce you by some other name than you own, Brown, Jones or Smith. Yes, that is it—Smith, I'll say Mr. Notary—this is Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith—Mr. Notary, and *wont* that be a joke on the old fellow?"

"Capital," roared Grube, staggering to his feet, "capital, I say. A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a

donkey! 'specially one like that thick-headed old—what did you call him?"

"Notary," responded Skinner, with a vicious smile."

"Noddary! Yes, that's it," echoed Grube in a husky voice, leaning over the table. Noddary! that mule-pated, long-eared mongrel that won't know Foxey Grube from Smith. Ha-ha-ha! Capital, I say," and he dropped into his chair, limp and apparently thoroughly used up.

Ralph Skinner arose, walked to the window and looked down on the pavement. The night was very dark, and the wind came from the lake in furious gusts, driving dark, low banks of storm clouds over the city. The street was entirely deserted, for even the police officers had crawled into friendly doorways for shelter from the drifting snow.

"It is singular that he does not come," muttered Skinner. "Singular indeed, and yet I am not certain that that fool yonder is quite peppered enough, but I think he'll do, at least I'll take the chances.. The plan is an excellent one at least and I don't see how it can possibly fail. The circumstances are all in my favor, and no court in christendom will decide against the genuineness of that signature. It is perfect in every detail, an exact *fac simile*, which, after all, is the real all important. Still I must have a witness and a notary's seal affixed. It is fortunate that Grube witnessed the deed to the property which I bought of Barry when he was here the last time, and that O'Conner was the notary employed, neither will remember anything about the amount or location of the property conveyed to me, and so all I have to do is muddle their brains, get them to sign and then send them home to sleep off their *Dovers powders*, ha-ha-ha!"

Grube's head gradually leaned forward until his chin rested on his breast, and while old Skinner stood by the window whispering his thoughts to the night and storm, he appeared to be sleeping. Presently, however, he straightened up and said in a thick, husky voice, "Trot 'em out! Why don't you trot 'em out?"

"What?" inquired Skinner, turning around from the window.

"Why the papers to be sure, what else? Didn't you say something about signing some papers?" answered Grube, swaying back and forth in his chair and clinging to the table for support as otherwise evidently he would have fallen to the floor.

"Oh, yes, certainly," replied Skinner, "certainly, but wait my dear fellow until the notary comes. He will be here presently and then we can attend to the matter in a flash. It don't take long to sign one's name you know."

"No?" queried Grube, with a sudden and singular gleam of intelligence in his eyes.

Skinner observed the look, and flashed a keen inquiring glance into Grube's face, but the dull, sodden expression of drunkenness was all he could then observe, and returning, he sat down in his chair by the stove, adding in a forced jocular tone, "when we have fixed the papers, we will have a regular carouse, and make the demijohn as well as our spirits considerably lighter, I fancy, eh?"

"Y-e-s; but I never signs en-thin' 'thout reading," responded Grube, dubiously.

"Oh, pshaw! There is no secret about the matter, and you can read it if you are so particular, but it is only a dry legal document of no interest or importance

to anybody but me," replied Skinner, carelessly. "But you don't need to bother your brains over it; why I wouldn't read it myself for a dollar. Let us take another—" At that moment footsteps resounded in the lower hall and soon the heavy tread of some one ascending the stairs slowly, and with extreme caution, could be heard. After a brief pause, during which Skinner listened attentively, while the muscles of his face twitched the wrinkles this way and that, and the deep saffron color of his skin changed to pale ash, while he changed position in his chair, momentarily clutching its arms with his skeleton-like hands, he faltered out in a strange, hollow tone, and his voice sounded so unnatural that it seemed even to him that some one else was speaking. "Who can that be?"

Miserable mortal! Soulless miser! Staggering under the weight of three-quarters of a century of wicked life; petrified by sin, reeking with evil thoughts and motives toward your fellow-beings, starving and suffering amid abundance, with thousands at your command; piling up thousands each year, that finally you may die and leave it all; die with the bitter curses of outraged humanity ringing in your ears. Why do you tremble and turn pale at every unusual sound? Why do you see in every human form and hear in every footstep the approach of an avenger, or an officer of the law armed with a warrant of arrest? Guilty conscience, answer!

Skinner had borrowed two chairs that day from the tenant in the basement of his building; old, rickety affairs of barely sufficient strength to hold up the weight of an ordinary man, and as he heard the footsteps approaching the door, he glanced nervously in that

direction, and then at the rickety chair near the window. Finally there came a loud knock, and Skinner called out in a quivering voice, "Come in!"

"And so I will, and thank ye, sir, your honor, Mr. Skinner," responded a cracked, squeaking voice with broad Irish accent, and a huge, unwieldy form came sidewise through the opening as the door swung back on its hinges complainingly. "So I will, your honor, Mr. Skinner," repeated the voice, "Patsy O'Connor, at your disposal—agreeable to your request."

"Ah! yes, Mr. O'Connor, walk in," simpered Skinner, rising and extending his hand to the visitor. "Permit me to introduce you to my friend, Mr. Smith—Mr. John Smith. Mr. Smith, Mr. O'Connor, the Notary."

Grube looked up vacantly at the huge form towering above him, dropped his limp hand into the great palm which the other held out, responded feebly to the vice-like grip and vigorous shake, and mumbled confusedly about rogues' gallery, pleasant morning, happy weather and New-Year's stormy.

Meanwhile, Skinner had brought the chair from the window, and, placing it near the table, invited the notary to be seated; but that individual, after a critical examination of it, removed his hat, pulled his scalp lock and ducked his head toward Skinner, observing, "I owes me present honorable position to yez, Misther Skinner, an' I am at yer service t' do yer bidding in all matters not directly forninst me flesh and bones, but when it comes to sich, as sittin' on a crazy sawhorse o' th' loikes o' that, I must beg t' be excused, yer honor, t' save broken bones an' furniture."

"Well then have this chair," replied Skinner, pointing toward his own. "That is strong enough for you, I'll warrant, and now, before we begin business, suppose we take a friendly tip at this," producing the demijohn and pushing the glasses, when filled, toward O'Connor and Grube.

"All right, Skinner, that is my ticket, precisely," blubbered Grube as he swayed back and forth in his chair. "Here's to your luck and the nails in your coffin, old leather face, and to your skin full of blarney Mr. McCarty, notary or what not. Here's to all of us. May we go up in a whirl and freeze, where the roses double sweetness have, with the polar bear and the Turks playing leap frog with the man in the moon." Then he took the liquor down at a single dash, dropped the glass on the floor and settled back in his chair blinking idiotically at the fire-fly light of the tallow dip. Then O'Connor raised his glass, nodded and pulled his scalp lock toward Skinner, saying, "your health, your honor, and many a happy New-Year to us all."

When he put down the glass there were dregs in the bottom similar to those in Grube's first glass, and half an hour later the notary could barely distinguish the light of the tallow dip from the uncertain glimmer of the complaining fire, or Skinner from Grube.

Then Skinner arose, awoke Foxey Grube from the delightful little cat nap into which he had glided, laid the sheet of legal cap paper before him, dipped a pen in the ink, handed it to him, and pointing to the lower left hand corner of the document, requested him to sign his name.

Foxey Grube appeared to be very stupid, and sat swaying to and fro on his chair holding the pen

loosely in his hand and looking vacantly at the writing before him. Skinner did not observe the peculiar expression of Grube's eyes or their quick motions as they ran over the lines, else he would have paused just there in his wicked scheme and would have destroyed that paper. However, he became impatient at Grube's delay, and after some vehement urging, he at last scrawled his signature, and the pen dropped from his limp hand to the floor.

The notary received the same attention, and his seal was properly affixed by Skinner who returned the stamp to its owner's pocket. And so the work was accomplished, and while Skinner was folding the papers, his guests glided away to dreamland and began to snore in chorus.

Skinner gazed a moment at his tools and dupes, smiled grimly, went to the window, opened it and looked down on the pavement. There in front of his hallway stood a closed carriage, and three men were walking up and down the pavement stamping their feet and whipping their hands against their bodies, else they would have frozen. Skinner coughed three times, a dry, hacking cough, and immediately those men entered the hallway below and noiselessly ascended the stairs. An hour later both Grube and O'Connor were in their own beds, the latter still in dreamland, his journey from Skinner's apartment to his own notwithstanding.

When the men who conveyed him to his own apartment from Skinner's garret—and with the aid of the night porter put him to bed—had gone, and Grube was alone; when their footsteps had died away in the great hall and profound silence reigned, he broke forth into a mocking laugh, arose, lighted the gas, put on his dressing gown and slip-

pers, stirred the fire until it blazed cheerily, light-
ed a cigar and then sat down in his easy chair to
think.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PALACE OF THE AVENUE.

The residence of Judge Dudley, on Michigan avenue, was a commodious and handsome structure. All that cultivated taste could suggest or art and mechanical skill produce, contributed to the construction and adornment of that lofty and beautiful building. It was popularly denominated "The Palace of the Avenue," and pointed out to strangers as one of the finest architectural gems of the city. People would stand and gaze admiringly on its beautiful curves and angles, its graceful outlines and grand sweep of cornice, with lofty roof towering above crowned by a stately observatory in full view of the lake. The outbuildings, arbors, fountains, statuary, lawns and shrubbery were in perfect harmony with that noble pile, so that the observer, after having carefully viewed its wonders of architecture, and its marvelous neatness and elegance of adornment, could not but associate it with youth, beauty and happiness.

Singular, it is, how many ghastly incongruities are woven into life; how wealth and misery, beauty and hideousness, purity and depravity, warm amorous youth and cold, impotent age are often shackled together in near and sacred relations. Therefore, might not this be coined into an adage: "Enter a palace and find woe."

But the Palace of the Avenue was a happy home, an exception to the general rule, and there was no skeleton closet within its walls. Age dwelt there, but it was kind, beautiful and noble age in the per-

son of Judge Dudley; and youth and beauty dwelt there—pure youth and radiant beauty in the person of Katherine Dudley. Eighteen years successively—the old and new—had in Kate Dudley's divine form molded and perfected an object of rare beauty, and nature had placed within that temple a mental organization of wonderful perfection, and a pure soul, softly toned to the ear of a sensitive conscience, and had made each nerve and sense a delicate key to sound alarm to a clear understanding. A decided brunette, tall and graceful, she was a very queen of women and a great favorite in aristocratic society, where she was ever the center of a throng of admiring suitors, and where women fawned around her and bit their lips from vexation of soul, tortured by envy and longing for revenge.

Judge Dudley and his daughter lived alone together in their elegant home, and alone together in the world; for, with the exception of a few very distant relatives, they were the last of their name and blood. Of a proud, aristocratic lineage, old, and of honorable fame even in the remote history of that grand and glorious nation on whose dominions the sun never sets, and whose banner flaunts proudly in the breeze of every clime—they had kept the name stainless and the blood noble and pure, and honor, love and charity were their perpetual guests.

Against Judge Dudley's life, old Father Time had jotted down three score and ten in the record book of years; he had reached the foot of the hill and stood in the full glow of the sunset of an eventful, yet peaceful life, and only awaited the command of the Master to put on the robe of immortality and the crown of eternal glory.

He was a genial, noble old gentleman, tender-hearted and pure, and a genuine lover of mankind. The poor never appealed to him for aid in vain, nor were the hungry ever sent away from his door unsatisfied. God had blessed him abundantly, and multiplied his opportunities to do good, and during his many years of life he had been as perpetual sunshine to all around him, and joy followed his footsteps—even ran before—strewing his pathway with the flowers of peace and love, and wooing the bright spirits of memory and anticipation to thrill his heart with pure and sweet emotions. And even that relentless tyrant, Time, would fain have paused in his count and obliterated many a mark from the score in his record book of years, if thereby he could have secured a new lease of life for his friend; he would have broken his scythe, corked up his glass and gone to sleep—but alas, the laws of the Great Eternal are inexorable, and Father Time could only sigh and score as the years went by, wooing to his glass the spirit of charm that only golden sand might run.

Charitable institutions had been liberally endowed by him, and continued to flourish under his munificence and fostering care, and the needy, suffering, toiling poor had ever been his wards and pensioners.

Ah, well does the writer remember that grand, proud, noble, honest, modest, old man, and as tearfully we summon from the slumbering, shadowy past the reigning spirits of his life, as the mighty throng joyfully respond, and one by one go flitting by, in letters of light on the crown of glory encircling each fair head, we read the record of his kind words and generous deeds.

Who says that man dies like a beast? Who says

that the soul of man is not immortal? Only the fool. Can such a soul as that we have just described sink into eternal nothingness? No—a thousand times—no. It is a part of the great eternal power which made and controls the universe, and when disembodied goes back to whence it came, a separate, intelligent, though dependent, unit of the great whole, retaining all of the faculties and pure impulses with which it is endowed in this life, reason, perception, affection and memory. Therefore what we call death is only life, not a new life, but entrance into another stage of the existence of the immortal soul, which never began and which will never end.

Judge Dudley was a profound scholar, an eminent jurist, and had served on the bench with marked ability many years. After a long, brilliant and useful professional career, he had retired to the quiet of his beautiful home, and appeared in court only when helplessness appealed for aid against money—when outraged innocence required a protector and champion. Then he was an irresistible gladiator in the arena of jurisprudence, and from the power of his profound reasoning and the inspiration of his matchless eloquence, injustice cowered away, abashed, terror-stricken and vanquished.

All day, the first day of the new year, the Palace of the Avenue had been thronged with visitors of every grade and type, from the haughty millionaire to the fortune-hunting adventurer, and the place-seeking, cringing sycophant, whose lives, one and all, might be summed up with this result: "Fashion, foppery and fraud." Indeed, they were mere imitation articles, floating around in the social circle, desperately endeavoring to ap-

pear genuine. Cut glass and paste elegantly mounted, but impossible to disguise; talking baboons flourishing stale compliments and chattering foolish gossip and insipid fashionable slang, aping graceful attitudes and parroting set speeches smattering strongly of the ultra English pronunciation and grievously insulting the letters r and h. And so the tide flowed in and out of the great mansion where Kate Dudley held court as queen of hearts and received the tiresome homage of her admirers.

As shadows crept eastward and night came gliding over the lake and city, the last visitor departed, and, as his carriage whirled away from before the Palace of the Avenue, the doors were closed, and silence and darkness brooded in the great halls and parlors of the mansion, and fair Kate Dudley returned to the sacred seclusion of her boudoir and sat down to think. She held in her hand an unopened letter, and gazed earnestly upon the superscription. It had been placed in her hand secretly by one of the latest guests who had undertaken to deliver the message to oblige a friend. She well knew the handwriting on the envelope, and seemed undecided about breaking the seal.

“I ought to return it unopened,” she said, in a low musing tone, “and yet I loved him once—when he was good and pure—ere the devouring flames of sin had scorched and blackened his soul.”

Long she sat in profound meditation, telling her thoughts to the empty air, while the shadows deepened in the angles of the building and darkness came swiftly in the footsteps of twilight and settled down over the lake and city. Finally, with a sudden movement of her hands, she broke the

seal of the envelope, drew forth the letter and read:

"KATHERINE:—I will not call you dear, because I dare not, and yet you are dearer to me than all else of earth. But I will not weary you by a repetition of what I have told you many times, and what you once believed, and to which you responded only a few months ago with pure and ardent affection.

"Ah, well do I remember the joyous day when you placed your dear hand in mine and promised to be my wife. Even now, as I write these words, a thrill of joy comes to my heart with the remembrance of the happy events of one year ago to-night. One year—only one year? My God! it seems to me a century, aye, an eternity of woe and anguish, for in that brief space of time I have lost everything near and dear to me in this life—fortune, honor and peace of mind, and thousandfold more than all else. your confidence and your love.

"You have returned to me my gifts to you, the gifts of your affianced husband; you have recalled your plighted vows to me and scorned me as a vile outcast. Well, perhaps it is just, but oh! Kate, is it kind, is it right, thus rudely to break the only charm which binds a human soul to life?

"Kate, do you not know that there are such things as genuine repentance and reform? Can you not believe me when I tell you that I stand upon the verge of a moral precipice with a yawning gulf of sin, woe and despair at my very feet, and that I hold out my hands and beseech you to save me from an awful doom?

"Oh, Kate, will you not save me? Will you not give me back your vows, your love, your faith, and lead me away from moral death in this life into the paths of purity and peace?

"I will come to-night to receive from your own lips your answer to this, my last, despairing appeal. At the very hour one year ago, when you promised to become my wife will I come to you, and may your soul be touched by the gentle hand of the sweet spirit of sympathy, and may your old love for me return to your heart like the warm bright sunshine to the chilled earth after a fierce tempest of hail, and may you take me back into your warm and generous heart and save me from my evil self.

CHARLES."

As the clock in a lofty neighboring church spire struck the hour of nine, Charles Barry walked rapidly along the avenue, ascended the broad stone steps of the Palace, rang the door bell, was admitted, gave his card to the servant, and was ushered into the reception room. Sinking down wearily

into an easy chair, he sighed, leaned forward and covered his face with his hands. Half an hour went by, moment by moment, marked and told by the clock on the mantel, which chattered and scolded at old Father Time for his tardiness. The minutes chased each other along the dial right merrily, only to be swept by the stern and relentless reaper, Time, into the garner of the Almighty, to be sown again by those loving hands in the fertile fields of futurity, to grow again, and blossom and yield, and again to be garnered in.

Half an hour, and Charles Barry had not moved nor changed position, and sat so still that an observer, but for the occasional sigh, almost groan, which escaped from his parched lips, would have presumed him to be sleeping. Finally, the door noiselessly opened, and Kate Dudley glided softly in and paused before him. He was evidently unconscious of her presence and she stood still, scarcely breathing, looking pityingly down upon him. Her face was pallid as that of the dead, and her large dark eyes glowed with an unnatural luster, one hand was raised, and its index finger rested upon her lips, which were white as those of a marble statue. Her other hand was raised as though to ward off some present but unseen danger, or to strike a blow in defense. Finally she spoke in a low cold tone which sounded strangely in her own ears.

“Well?”

Taken completely by surprise, Charles Barry started as though suddenly struck by an invisible hand, glanced swiftly up into her face, arose to his feet and exclaimed in a tone of mingled terror and alarm:

“Oh, Kate, it can not be, it can not, must not be,

I see my doom written on your face. Oh, Kate, Kate—relent, relent and pardon and love me again. Send me not away to despair, and to death. See, my eyes are red and my face is swollen with weeping—weeping because of my sin and folly, weeping because I can not stand before you with a spirit as pure and proud within me as that of one year ago to-night.” Glancing at the clock, he added in a low, sad, tremulous tone, “One year ago to-night, Kate, at this very moment you promised to become my dear wife.”

“But who forged the knife to sever the bonds?” she said, coldly.

“Fate,” he replied, almost fiercely—“cruel merciless fate; but Kate, it is in your power to cheat that stern tyrant of his victim—ah—”

“Fate?” she responded, musingly. “Fate,” she repeated, scornfully—“no, not fate, there is no such thing as fate! That mythological god, Fate, is a convenient scape-goat for all those who fall into sin and disgrace. Mythology is a lie, a relic of the ages of barbarism, and its silly philosophy can not be successfully utilized in extenuation of evil deeds in this age of enlightened human progress. Who believes that there are good and evil spirits around us, continually at war each with the others, struggling to draw us within their respective influences? Bah! go to the bloody cruel ancients for such foolish philosophy and study their black art that you may be able to weave a charm or compound a potion that will drive away the evil spirits, which have stolen your reason, your virtue and your honor, if you believe in fate, but do not, I pray you, insult common intelligence in my presence by offering as an excuse for your

deliberate departure from the broad highway of integrity, virtue and honor. Fate, no—there is no such thing as fate. This is the plain simple truth. Man is the designer and builder of his own moral fortress, in a great measure. He is the molder of his own mortal destiny in some degree. Within his heart is the intuitive knowledge of good and evil, and if he deliberately sins, he alone is responsible.”

“You are cold and pitiless ” he said, bitterly.

“No,” she replied, in a softer tone, “I may appear cold, but I am not pitiless—neither am I as cold as I doubtless appear to you. I pity—God only knows how much I pity you, or what sacrifices I would not make to save you from yourself—save that sacrifice which you now entreat me to make, but that can never be.”

“Then this—this is your final answer?” he said, as his face grew white—“positively your final answer?”

“It is my final answer,” she rejoined, calmly. “I decline to be your savior at the expense of my good name, and my sacred honor.”

“It is well,” he replied. “I will go to my doom, but I will drag you down with me into the gulf, and you shall fall so low, Kate Dudley, that even devils will pity you.”

“I wish this to be our last interview,” she replied in a half whisper of suppressed anger, “and I regard it as now ended.”

As she uttered the last words she touched the bell-pull, and as the servant appeared she said to him kindly, “show the gentleman out.”

With weary, faltering footsteps, Kate Dudley returned from the reception room to her boudoir,

sat down in the easy, willow rocker before the fire, covered her face with her hands and wept. Long she remained thus swaying to and fro, sobbing and weeping like a grieved child, and quivering and swaying like a willow tree before a tempest. A storm of passionate grief was sweeping over her soul, wafting away forever the dearest and sweetest hopes of her pure and beautiful young life. Finally she became calmer, for the storm of passion had spent its force, and, as the willow, when the tempest subsides, lifts its graceful boughs aloft, and joyfully flutters its green leaves in the warm sunshine, so did Kate Dudley dismiss forever from her heart the fond anticipations of only a year before, removed her hands from before her face, wiped away her tears and smiled. It was a sad, sweet smile which rested upon her lips, and played among the dimples of her lovely face, a smile of mingled grief and triumph, for she had gained a great moral victory, and that sweet peace which comes to the human heart from an inner consciousness of duty, well and faithfully done, had settled down upon her soul. She sat still a moment in deep thought, arose, went to her secretary, took from it a letter which had been previously opened, and which bore the postmark of the previous day, returned to her seat before the fire, drew the letter from the envelope and read:

"DEAR DARLING KITTY:

"Where art thou? Oh, light of my soul where art thou? No echoes come back to me, for the plain and simple reason that there is no place convenient that can produce the echo. But, seriously, Kitty dear, I haven't seen you for an age, and am hungry, starving,

for your loving sympathy. Now I can see the quiet, lovely smile on your dear, good face, and hear you say, 'Why Grace, I visited you at the store only a few days ago, and we communed together more than an hour.'

"An hour, forsooth! Oh, Kittie, dear schoolmate and dear companion of my joyous girlhood, counselor and loving friend—an hour, only an hour of the sunlight of your presence, and one hundred and thirty-nine hours of toil and sad yearning for your loving words, and the soul purifying influences of your dear presence! But there, there, I'll not reproach you dear, for like a queen, (and a queen of goodness you truly are,) you can do no wrong; but Kitty, darling, do come to me as soon as possible, for I have much to tell you, one thing especially which will interest you very much, and concerning which I need your wise counsel.

"Now listen, love, while I whisper softly in your ear, something which will doubtless surprise you, and, perhaps, gladden your heart, for you well know what a life of bodily servitude is mine, and how dear, frail mother toils at household duties, and how lonely is our home. But listen dear—I know you are just dying with curiosity—and here it is:

"I have just received a letter from Charles Barry, a brief, but loving epistle, in which he asks me to become his wife. Kate, I have known him from early childhood; he is, as you know, my cousin, and yet, I know but little of the inner history of his life, but little of his moral character and tendencies, and absolutely nothing concerning his financial condition, only, I have heard that he has a comfortable income, but from what source rumor saith not. Remember dear, that you who know all things which it is possible for mankind to know and remain pure and good, have never told me ought concerning him, although you have long been conscious of the fact that I greatly admire if I do not actually love him.

"Now, Kitty dear, come and give me your wise and loving counsel concerning this matter, and be assured in advance of my earnest, heartfelt gratitude.

"In his letter Charles says that he will call on me at home to personally receive my answer, day-after-to-morrow evening, January 2d, and I must see you before that time. Do come dear, to

"Your loving and faithful friend,

"GRACE WORSHAM."

As she finished reading it, Kate Dudley pressed the letter to her lips and then to her heart, carefully refolded and replaced it in the envelope, arose and put it carefully away in the secret

drawer of her secretary, and then sat down again before the fire to think.

* * * * *

As the outer door of the Palace closed behind him, Charles Barry hurried down the broad flight of steps along the paved footway, through the iron gate out on to the street pavement, and rapidly along the avenue, totally indifferent to direction. There was a dull dead pain in his heart, his brain throbbed, and passion had usurped the place and power of reason. He waded through deep snow and along dark and unfrequented by-ways until the great bells chimed midnight. Their deep sonorous tones rang out in startling peals on the frosty night, and as he stood leaning against the railing of a bridge which spans the river, their echoes seemed like human voices saying, "Revenge! Revenge!! Revenge!!!"

His heart, which seemed to have lost its motion, and lay like a lump of ice in his bosom, gave a violent throb and began to pulsate as the awful admonition of the bells echoed in his ears, while confusion vanished from his brain before the swift advance of reason and calm, dispassionate thought resumed its sway.

He looked upward. Heavy banks of storm clouds were drifting across the sky, and he experienced pleasurable sensations in the contemplation of their swift and lofty flight and their wild, weird, phantom-like advance, like spectre hosts moving to battle.

A storm was brewing in his soul, a fierce storm of passion and of hate and black clouds, surcharged with the lightning of envy and the hail of revenge, were gathering there. The wind whis-

bled and moaned through the iron framework of the bridge, shook the brim of his hat furiously and flapped the skirts of his great coat against the railing on which he leaned. Snow drifted over his feet half way up to his knees, and the frosty air pinched his face, but he stood as silent and motionless as a statue. The swift flight of thought through his brain had utterly deprived him of the power of motion, and the clockwork of his inner being continued to run, though the hands were unable to mark the flight of time.

Finally the bells solemnly pealed forth the hour of one, and again they seemed as human voices saying, "Home!" He started as though suddenly aroused from slumber, raised his hand and turned up the brim of his hat which the wind had blown down over his face, stamped the snow from his feet and walked slowly away, saying, "I thank you bells for your kind suggestion, but, alas, I have no home. Curses on my fate, curses on all human kind, and a million curses on your head proud, scornful Kate Dudley.

"Ah, is it possible that she can have fathomed my designs in case I failed to win her back to me?" he exclaimed after a moment's silence, and stopped short and passed his hand across his brow. "Well, no matter, it matters not, she has no heart, no soul, and is only a beautiful animated breathing temple of clay in human form tenanted by a talking devil. Ha—ha! fair, cruel, faithless Kate Dudley, you drove me forth without one, even one kind word, to die the death of a moral leper, and by the fates, no not by the fates, but by that mystical being

whom religionists call God, by that being in whom you profess to believe, if I fail to bring your proud head low, even into the very dust, may I never—well, *I won't fail*, for I have the field all mapped out, and every avenue of escape double guarded. So Snoozer's stew is the next in order, and I'll put that pot on to boil immediately."

CHAPTER IX.

THE BODY AT THE MORGUE.

A body lay at the morgue awaiting identification, the same that had been found by the street cleaners as they shoveled the snow from the pavement on Lake street early New-Year's morning. It was evidently the body of a sailor, for it was clad in sailor's costume, and on its breast were tattooed, in India ink, grotesque figures, and ships at full sail, and on its arms and hands flags, anchors and chains. He had recently received severe contusions about the head and face, which were swollen and disfigured almost beyond human semblance, and the coroner's jury had not been able to elicit any evidence in reference to the time, place, or by what agency the body had been so terribly mutilated—more than revealed by the surgeon's post-mortem examination. He had certified to the jury that the bruises had been inflicted but a few hours before death, by blows of a clenched hand, as knuckle marks were distinctly visible. He further certified that deceased had not received any necessarily fatal blows, but appearances indicated that he had died from intoxication and exposure.

Few had been to look at the corpse, beyond the usual idle, gaping crowd of ragged vagabonds who invariably hang around such places, and yet occasionally a closely veiled woman of the better class would glide in, glance swiftly and timidly at the horrible, sickening object lying at full length on the marble slab, and then, with a shudder of horror

and a sigh of relief, as quickly and noiselessly depart.

Aged men, looking for absent wayward sons or daughters, came also, trembling as they entered, and with feeble, tottering steps, approached that loathsome object there, but their faces brightened as, with lighter tread, they walked away, for it was not the loved prodigal.

Yet, and yet, was it not "somebody's" dear one? and did not an aged mother in a distant city lean over her feeble fire that New-Year's day and pray God to spare and bring safely home her absent, wayward boy? Alas, poor soul, anxious, doting, fond mother, how she prayed day after day, listened for the coming of familiar footsteps, and held faithful vigils year after year, until her dear old eyes became sightless with watching and weeping. Then, as the last grain of sand fell from her glass, and the last leaf of her book was turned, she whispered the name of her darling and sank peacefully into that calm, breathless, eternal repose.

The body lay thus all that day of festivity and rejoicing, and the night and the day following until high noon. Curiosity seekers no longer came, and only an occasional anxious one glided in and out of that receptacle for the unknown dead.

High noon! Clang-dong! Clang-dong! rang out the bells from lofty spires, and human tides dashed and surged along the streets and broad avenues of the great Garden City. Howbeit, the body lay at the morgue, silent and stark, for the human machinery was broken and motionless forever.

"High noon," so said a gruff voice, and Michael Snoozer paused before the door of the morgue, hastily consulted his watch, returned it to his pocket, and then entered advancing on tip-toe.

toward that horrible something on the marble slab. Just then, another form appeared in the doorway, and as Snoozer glanced around, he recognized the person, beckoned to him, and as he approached said in a low tone, "Foxy, d'ye know this 'un?"

"Yes, it is Sandy Burns, and done for, sure enough," was the subdued reply, and Foxy Grube went nearer the glass partition and gazed several moments silently at the bloated features of the dead.

"He's been at a fist-and-skull punch, and gouge rumpus somewhere 'mong th' bloody foot-pads an' poker pals 'long th' wharf I 'spect," said Snoozer, reflectively. "But," he added, after a pause, "where th' feller's bin more'n two months past, is w'at gits me. Where d'ye 'spose the feller's been—and the papers?" the last three words muttered to himself, but quite audible.

"The Lord only knows," was the subdued reply. Then instantly Grube whirled around toward Snoozer and exclaimed: "*By jingo, I've struck a lead!*"

"W'at is it?" inquired Snoozer, interestedly rubbing his low receding forehead in endeavors to induce a rapid circulation of the ideas, which he anticipated Grube would flash upon him unawares. But that person's didn't flash, as expected, but instead, recovered his self-possession quite as suddenly as he had lost it a moment before, and his reply, though exceedingly commonplace came quick and pointed.

"What is it Snoozer? Why anyone can see with his mouth that the fellow has been beaten to death in some hole in the wall, just look at his face."

"Oh!" growled Snoozer, disappointedly, pulling his hat down over his forehead again, "Is that all?"

A feller would 'ave thought you'd made some important discovery. I was talking 'bout the *papers*, not the *man*. But ye aren't right even 'bout that, for he got drunk and crawled down beside a wall over on Lake street an' froze to death, leastwise th' doctors say so, an' I reckon *they* oughter know, them scratches on his face didn't kill him by a very large jugful."

He did not see the sly twinkle of Grube's eyes as that individual turned partly around to take a last look at the horrible dead, else he might have demanded an explanation, and continued to rub his head more vigorously than before, to induce the circulation of ideas. Suspicion might have assumed tangible form, and Grube might have been solicited to answer some very troublesome and embarrassing questions. However, nothing of the kind occurred, and a few moments later both were on the street and walking in opposite directions.

Foxy Grube thrust his hands down deep into the pockets of his great coat, elevated his chin, contorted his body into the peculiar Grecian-bend poise, and went nipping along with a hop and skip in the peculiar gait known latterly as the Boston dip. It was his favorite manner of walking and withal quite original with him. Grube was incumbered with a superabundance of conceit and a heavy smattering of contemptible vanity, for he was never so well pleased as when being gaped at by a multitude. His clothing was always of the finest quality and made in the most excruciatingly fashionable style, and his whole "make up" might have been aptly termed "loud," from the jaunty little hat set on his blonde, curly head, saucily awry, to his light blue neck-tie and the broad plaid figures of his coat and pants, down to his trim little

feet, in dainty patent leather boots. From boyhood he had been that lithe, trim body—a perfect lady killer, and so boldly had he flaunted his peculiarities that his companions had coined for him an appropriate slang sobriquet “Foxey.”

He was in especial good humor that day, as he ambled along, for, to use his own expressive slang, he had “struck a lead.” In the presence of that repulsive body at the morgue, he had coolly unraveled a tangled snarl of circumstances, picked out each thread with the nimble fingers of keen thought, followed each through every intricate winding, and quietly undid every knot until it lay before him a mystery solved. His Boston dip amounted almost to a clog dance, for, as he skipped along, the tapering heels of his dainty patent leather boots kept perfect time to the merry tune he whistled. But these outward manifestations of delight in nowise interfered with mind labor, for motive, that secret, powerful and independent spring of human action, operated with increased force on the balance-wheel of thought, and went straight to correct conclusions. Plans were formed with precision and in minute detail, gradual approaches were planned, well fortified and strongly guarded, while the bombardment, the storming and glorious victory followed in rapid succession. Nevertheless, he ambled, whistled and performed the Boston dip as though thought and action were in perfect harmony. Finally, he stumbled over a loose brick on the pavement, hurt his feet and soiled his dainty patent leather boots, which broke the train of his meditations, and in his sore vexation of spirit as he rubbed his sore foot, he viciously broke the second commandment.

As he hopped around on one foot, rubbing the

other with his hands, petting that particular corn which had received the full force of the shock, he inadvertently glanced down an alley, on the crossing of which he stood, and saw a very small boy staggering along under a heavy load of something in a large sack, which he was barely able to keep on his shoulder. Just then that abused corn was forgotten, and the grimace on Grube's face was ironed down effectually by a smile. He glanced nastily around, crossed the street, called a news-boy from the opposite corner, and said to him, nodding toward the alley, and placing a small coin in his hand: "In the alley over there is a boy carrying a sack of rags; go tell him that Foxey Grube will be at home at three o'clock, and will have a good dinner ready for him if he will come at that time."

Grube watched the screeching news vender until he disappeared in the alley, and then walked away, keeping a sharp watch in every direction, and muttering: "The old rascal is sharp as scissors and shadows the boy continually. I must work cautiously, or he'll take the wind out of my sails and leave me in a dead calm. He is a cunning old rascal, long-headed and deep, but I have outwitted him thus far, and have perfect confidence in my ability to continue the operation. If I have luck, I'll snare him with his own net, and ——." At that moment he ascended the steps of his lodging-house, opened the door with a latch key, and began ascending the stairs, when a door on the lower floor opened, and a woman peeped out and said: "Oh! is it you, Mr. Grube? I declare, I didn't know your step, you walked so much lighter than usual. Been having good luck, eh?"

"Rather," he replied, pleasantly. Then he took

a step upward, paused, stroked his chin, twisted his imperial and mustache, and, as the woman was about to close the door, he called out to her: "Mrs. Browne, please have dinner for two served in my room at three o'clock."

At the appointed hour Jimmie ascended the front steps of Grube's lodging house and rang the door bell. His summons was answered by the woman of the house who, in compliance with his request, conducted him to Grube's apartments. That individual received him cordially, brought a chair and seated him before the fire, chatted pleasantly about the gold fishes, the bird and the plants, until the timid child forgot his embarrassment and also chatted freely.

Presently, footsteps in the hall approached the door, and two servants entered, bearing a large basket and tray containing china, silverware and delicious food, piping hot.

During the preparations for the meal, Jimmie shifted uneasily in his chair and watched with eager, expectant glances the interesting proceedings. His replies to Grube's chatterings were in disjointed and confused monosyllables, and when the servants had retired and Grube placed chairs at the table, he eagerly accepted the invitation to dine.

"But before we begin," remarked Grube, "I must instruct you in table manners. You must use your knife and fork so (bending over Jimmie and placing them in his hands properly). You must cut your food so, and take it up on your fork so. You must not reach over the table and drag the food from the dishes with your hands, for that is very impolite. You must be careful not to drop food on the table-cloth or floor, and must, when neces-

sary, wipe your mouth with the napkin. Now let me see how nicely you can eat, and how gentlemanly you can act. There," he said, after having placed a bountiful supply of food on Jimmie's plate, "fire away now and help yourself when that is gone." Then he also sat down at the table, and the attack began. Jimmie handled his knife and fork with ridiculous awkwardness, at times utterly ignoring them, and while he continued to hold them in his hands, used his fingers to the infinite peril of his eyes. Grube's kind instructions, from time to time were duly heeded, and when the child's ravenous appetite had been fully satisfied, Grube leaned back in his chair and said:

"Well, Jimmie, how do you like the dinner?"

"Oh! it is splendid, sir; you have such nice things to eat, and—and—" He glanced admiringly around the room at the beautiful furniture, the plants, gold-fishes and at the Parian marble busts of poets and statesmen, at the rare old oil paintings on the walls and at the little noisy Swiss clock on the mantel. He hesitated and blushed as he swept all these beautiful objects at a glance, but finally stammered out, "You have so many beautiful things here, and are never cold nor hungry, so I 'spect you do not care to die and go to heaven. You are so happy here."

There was a long interval of silence, during which Grube was reaching down under the table searching for something on the floor, but, singular as it may appear, when he straightened up there was a suspicious moisture in his eyes, and tracks of two pearly dew-drops, heart-distilled, were plainly visible down his face. Jimmie had made a fresh attack on the omelet, and was so pre-occupied in his efforts to demolish that formidable

heap of deliciousness, that he did not observe the commiserating glances of his friend, else he might have failed in the accomplishment of the task. At length Grube asked:

“How much money did you get for your rags to-day?”

“Fifteen cents, sir.”

“Why, that is very little, is it not, for such a large sack full?”

“Yes, sir, but the junk-dealer won’t pay more, and it is so far to the other place.”

“When you are searching for rags and paper, don’t you find other things of value sometimes?”

A slight flush came on the boy’s face, and he replied hesitatingly, “Yes, sir, sometimes.”

“What do you do with those things? Try to find the owner, eh?”

“Uncle takes such things, sir; I take everything to him except such as the junk-dealer buys.”

They had left the table, and Jimmie sat before the fire looking at the blaze as it curled gracefully up the chimney, while his face was scarlet, and he twisted his thumbs and fingers nervously. Grube stood with his hands clasped behind him and back to the fire, warming the soles of his feet alternately and puffing away at a fragrant cigar with extreme gusto.

“What does your uncle do with those things?” inquired Grube, carelessly, elevating his chin and looking up at the ceiling, yet watching the boy from the corner of his right eye, and continuing to blow the fragrant, pearly clouds from his mouth.

“I don’t know, sir,” was the timid, hesitating reply, accompanied by many changes of position, twirling of thumbs and little sighs. “I—I must not talk about that. Un—uncle will whip me if I

talk about that. He—he said, ‘I mustn’t say anything about finding the bag.’ ”

Grube gave a low whistle, closed one eye, and drew down the corners of his mouth, and the boy slipped from the chair, shrunk back toward the door as he talked, trembled, and with white face betraying apprehension, clutched the door knob spasmodically.

“I—I must go now, Mr. Grube,” said Jimmie, in a tremulous regretful tone. “Uncle will punish me if I stay away too long, and—and I’m afraid he may have heard what you asked me ’bout—about the bag. He is everywhere, and sees and hears everything.”

Again the white circle came around Grube’s mouth, and, with a muttered curse, deep and heart-felt, he turned quickly, walked to the window, and looked away over the housetops to the storm-cast sky. It was a scene quite in keeping with the fierce tempest raging in his heart, and he experienced indefinable pleasure in its contemplation. Suddenly the clicking of the door latch attracted his attention, and, turning quickly around, he saw the door standing open and Jimmie in the act of passing out into the hall.

“Don’t go yet, Jimmie,” said Grube, hurriedly, and in a pleasant tone, accompanied by a winning smile, “Wait a moment, please, I’ll not keep you long. Haven’t I been kind to you my little friend? don’t go yet.”

Grube’s smile and appeal were to Jimmie absolutely irresistible, and with crimson face and downcast eyes he came back into the room sideways, closed the door, and resumed his seat before the fire.

Foxy Grube drew a chair close to Jimmie’s

side, reached forward, took his withered little hand in his plump warm palm, and, looking down kindly into his face, said, in a musical, modulated tone, "Jimmie, do you believe I am your friend?"

"Oh, yes sir," was the quick and earnest reply, accompanied by a reproachful glance. "You are very kind, and I *know* you are my friend."

"Well, then, Jimmie, why do you fear to tell me anything. Your uncle can not see or hear you, and if you really believe me your friend you should have confidence enough also to believe that I will not mention what you say to me, so your uncle can not possibly know what you tell me. Come, Jimmie, answer my question. What was in the sack?"

Thus reassured and encouraged, the boy looked up into Grube's face trustingly, and replied, "Some sailor clothes, account books and letters—some large letters, and I have heard uncle say to himself that they are worth a great deal."

"What kind of letters were they, did you hear him say?"

"Yes, sir, but I forget, something about houses I think."

"Mortgages?" suggested Grube.

"No sir, that is not the name."

"Deeds?"

"Oh, yes sir, that is what he called them," replied Jimmie quickly, brightening, and then a troubled look passed over his sad face, while he glanced around apprehensively over his shoulder toward the door and added, but "I'm afraid Uncle will hear." Then his voice fell to a whisper and he leaned toward Grube beseechingly and asked: "Are you quite sure that he is not listening in the hall by the door?"

"Quite sure," was the reply, very kindly

spoken, "poor child, don't fear, he could not get there without our knowledge, for the front hall door is locked. Come tell me, when and where did you find the sack?"

"Early yesterday morning just over the way from where we live, right by the brick wall of that new house, you know where I mean, don't you?"

"Yes, the dead man was found near there, wasn't he?"

"Yes sir, not more than ten feet from where I found the sack. Boo! how frightened I would have been if I had known he was there under the snow."

Grube yawned, gave Jimmie a silver dollar, arose, lighted a cigar and said:

"Well, perhaps you had better run home now, come every day and take dinner with me, my little—, *shall I call you my little son?*"

"Oh, yes sir if you please, I shall be glad to be your son, if you will have me, but—but—" He stopped short, blushed deeply and hung his head, and Grube noting his embarrassment, stooped and took his cold little hand in his and asked very kindly, "what else my dear, you said—'but' you were about to add something—why not be my little son?"

The child gave a quick despairing glance up into Grube's face, and thence down at his thin ragged clothes, turned his head aside, and said, in a tone which went straight to Grube's heart, "Because you are a nice, rich gentleman and I am but a poor ragged little boy, and everybody knows I gather rags, and—" He could add no more, his voice failed him, and a flood of tears gushed from his eyes.

"Poor little boy! homeless, friendless, suffering child," said Grube, with emotion, and reaching

down with a sudden eager movement he lifted him in his arms, and pressed him to his bosom as tenderly as a young mother caresses her new-born child. As he pressed a fervent kiss on the boy's forehead and smoothed back the tiny golden curls that clustered there, an expression of ineffable sadness came on his face and tears were in his eyes. Then placing the boy gently in the chair by the fire, he turned away to the window, and as he stood looking up at the gathering storm clouds, he raised his right hand above his head and broke forth in these passionate words: "God! *Is there a God?* If so, is He just, and if just will He not call me to an awful account for my great sin? And yet am I guilty of *all the wrong*, and will not the heartless villain who gave his young and beautiful sister into my sensual arms, that thereby he might hold me in his power a creature of his will—to do his accursed bidding, and aid him in piling up to heaven his mountain of gold, that he might use me as his cat's-paw to roll the hot chestnuts of wrong from the fire of sin, and finally to blacken still deeper the accursed plot, cast her adrift upon the world to wander I know not where, and die, will he not suffer also? I must in some degree repair the wrong, God help me."

Jimmie had slipped from the chair, glided timidly to Grube's side, and as the latter felt his presence grasped his hand and kissed it.

"Go, my child," said Grube, emotionally, "go now, and do not forget to come to-morrow. God bless you."

"Yes, papa," was the grateful reply, and then, as Jimmie went away, both said very kindly, "Good-bye."

As the echoes of Jimmie's footsteps died away

in the windings of the great hall, Foxey Grube lighted a fresh cigar, sank down into his arm chair and glided into a train of painful meditations. The white circle came around his mouth and disappeared alternately, and he smiled triumphantly, ground his teeth together in rage, and muttered curses as the humor seized him and prompted; and so the hours glided by until night shades gathered in the corners of the room and the bells tolled joyfully the hour when the toiling thousands of the great city eagerly hurry homeward to the peace, comfort and rest to be found only there. Then he arose, put on his great coat, hat and warm fur gloves, locked the door of his room and muttered as he passed along the great hall and down the stairs to the street: "*The Sack! dead man—Deeds! Um—hum, my suspicions were quite correct.*"

CHAPTER X.

SOME ADDITIONAL THREADS UNWOUND FROM A TANGLED SKEIN.

Michael Snoozer was actually meditating. With almost any other person that would have been nothing very remarkable, but for him—Michael Snoozer! to toil in any manner whatsoever, physically or mentally, was something truly wonderful.

Yet, as he went from the morgue slowly along the street he was thinking, reasoning from point to point, from cause to effect, and absolutely arriving at logical conclusions.

Nine-tenths of his brain lay in the back part of his head. In fact, there was no front part, phrenologically considered, his cranium exhibiting but very little intellectual development.

There was absolutely no development of veneration, spirituality, benevolence, ideality, sublimity or mirthfulness, suavity, composition or language, while acquisitiveness, alimentiveness, constructiveness, order, weight and individuality were very prominent, giving his forehead its knotted and gnarled appearance.

The back part of his head (drawing a line directly over the cranium from ear to ear) exhibited huge bumps at irregular intervals, phrenologically named “firmness, self-esteem, approbateness, cautiousness, secretiveness, destructiveness, combativeness and amateness.” The hollows between were as valleys, the bumps as mountains, and altogether his head presented many of the

peculiar characteristics of "The bad lands of the Cheyennes" on the great American plains.

Therefore, to continuously pursue any clearly defined or direct train of thought, was to bring in conflict the extremes of opposite tendencies, and do violence to his mental (?) organization. It was to array combativeness against caution, destructiveness against acquisitiveness, and firmness against amateness. These incongruous elements, in like degree and simultaneously excited, could not but produce strong eddies and counter currents in the flow of his thoughts and precipitate a violent conflict. Therefore, unclouded meditation unbiased by prejudice, was utterly impossible with him, being governed solely by the keenest of keen brute instinct.

He grasped facts with a sort of unerring intuition, utterly devoid of reason or logic, and had often in legal conflicts and political intrigues vanquished opponents of prominent intellectual capacity, polished and adorned by learning.

Yes, Michael Snoozer was actually meditating, and the effort wrinkled his brows, twisted his mouth around toward his left ear, and drew his little black eyes back deep into their almond-shaped sockets. He was trying to think about the dead man, Sandy Burns, the human wreck at the morgue, planning to discover Sandy's place of concealment during the previous three months and to recover the lost papers. The precise manner of Sandy's death was of no more interest or importance to him than that of a dog, for he was utterly devoid of all feeling of pity or sentiment of friendship. It seemed highly probable to Snoozer that Sandy did not have the papers with him when he laid down in the snow to die, else

they would have been found by the street cleaners when they discovered the body. No, that was clearly improbable, and it followed quite reasonably that he had left them with his clothes somewhere—doubtless at some hole in the wall on the wharf. Snoozer would put his human machines at work, his scores of sly detectives, to whom the highways and runways of the city, the dead-falls, traps, scalping places and hiding-dens of murderers and criminals of all grades, and the secure places of concealment for stolen articles were as familiar as the runaways of the Sands to Snoozer.

That was the plan beyond a doubt, and if his machines should fail to grind out something tangible, information at least, that would lead to the recovery of the lost papers ultimately, it would be something remarkable, quite the reverse of all similar endeavors.

He mumbled as he waddled along, one side at a time, like a man with a wooden leg, and people smiled and paused to look at him, and street imps jeered, calling out to him in volleys of slang, "old duck legs," "old monkey face," "old grizzly," but they were very careful to be safely concealed behind wooden Indians, bulletin boards, and house corners.

To all he was utterly indifferent, deaf to jeers and blind to scornful smiles, for his sensibilities were as blunt and tough as his skin, skull and conscience.

Finally he paused on a street corner, leaned against a lamp post, and lighted a cigar.

"Let me see," he said, as though addressing somebody, "I oughter find th' feller, 'cause he mount help a little. He's lightning on tracks, an' can smell meanness funder nor any Sander. I can

give him some pints t' work up, spur him right sharp 'bout th' gal. Salt th' old woman so she'll keep an' not squeal, and—an' build another 'dition t' th' Dew-Drop Inn. That's th' winnin' ticket, them's th' figures w'at'll sweep th' board. Full hand flush can't be beat, 'cept by two full hand flushes, an' t'other feller don't know how t' stock th' keards. Let me see. I'll go t' Stormy Jordan's Nose Paint. I'll find him there, I 'speck; bin up all night, you bet; he's a scorcher w'en he gits at it, an' never knows w'en t' let up."

Then he waddled down the street mumbling, "but it's double work anyhow, blast me eyes, an' I don't like sich foolishness. Don't see w'at business Sandy had t' throw up th' sponge 'fore th' paper got t' me, blast me eyes."

And so he waddled on, muttering, squinting, and chewing his cigar, utterly unconscious of the proximity of some one, who, as Snoozer leaned against the lamp post at the corner, had stood near, and, unobserved, listened to his audible meditations. That somebody had become deeply interested, just why, he was unable to determine. Yet there was something in Michael Snoozer's words, disconnected though they were, and somewhat unintelligible, which aroused within the listener a painful foreboding of evil to some one; his curiosity was excited, and he followed Snoozer, hoping to hear more.

"The Worsham' gal is a hyfalutin' daisy," continued Snoozer, "a rale bontonner an'-th'-cow-jump-over-th'-mooner. Barry'll have t' spruce up an' git rid o' them whisky blotches on his face, afore he can reasonably 'spect t' become her worser half an' gobble up th' stamps w'at she'll git from her uncle w'at Sandy squelched

w'en he sent th' old coon down t' splore th' bottom o' the lake. I'm devil enough to do almost anything, but blast me eyes if I could do as Charley Barry did. Hired his uncle squelched to git his money, an' then w'at's jes as bad, falls in so easily with my idea t' salt th' ole woman's coffee an' then gobble th' gal, stamps an' all in a lump, an' at one grab. It's biz, but rough to put a fellow's kin out o' th' way, an' never even wink over 't."

At this juncture Snoozer's audible meditations were interrupted by his arrival in front of Stormy Jordan's saloon and gambling house. It was magnificent, and possessed many peculiarities quite original with the proprietor, particularly the large sign in raised gilt letters over the saloon door: "*Nose Paint.*" Snoozer was about to enter, when the door opened and Charles Barry stepped out on the pavement. There was an informal greeting, a few hurried words, and then, arm in arm, they passed into the saloon.

Leo Cassell's face was very pale and his teeth were very firmly set together as he hurried on by the Nose Paint establishment toward the business quarter of the city. Snoozer's mutterings had thrown a brilliant flood of light upon a profound mystery, discovering to Cassell a dark, demoniac plot, and the infamous revelation had unmanned, bewildered and enraged him.

"I'll look to that," he said, savagely, between his closed teeth, as he ran toward his workshop. "I'll look to it, and you shall be amply and appropriately rewarded, infamous villains!"

CHAPTER XI.

RALPH SKINNER FILES HIS DEEDS TO CERTAIN REALTY
—JUDGE DUDLEY INVESTIGATES AND DISCOVERS A
LARGE SIZED FLAW IN SKINNER'S TITLE—ANOTHER
KINK STRAIGHTENED OUT IN THE TANGLED SKEIN.

Ralph Skinner had thrown a bomb into a certain real estate office in the city. Not a hollow ball or cylinder of iron filed with explosive material, but a plain, yellow envelope sealed and addressed to the proprietors. It was simply a letter delivered by a small, sad-faced boy in very thin and tattered garments, who had timidly handed it in at the door and then hurried away without a word of explanation. The porter had received and delivered the letter to the senior member of the firm, who found it to contain the following:

“CHICAGO, January 3d.

“GENTLEMEN:

“On the 17th of last September, I purchased of Mark Berry, of Buffalo, certain properties, to wit:

“Lot No. —, in block No. —, being 75 feet front on La Salle street, and 150 feet deep to alley, east half of lot No. —, in Block No. —, being 37½ feet front on Dearborn street, and 142 feet 6 inches deep to alley. Also lot No. — and —, containing respectively 75 feet front on Monroe street, and 150 feet deep to alley.

“All and singular with all buildings, pavements, and appurtenances thereunto belonging. Being and situate in the City of Chicago, County of Cook, and State of Illinois.

“By virtue of said conveyance by the said Barry, to me in fee simple and warranty, of the property above described; and said deeds having been duly entered of record by the Recorder of Deeds, in and for the county and city aforesaid. Now this is full and final notice to you as agents for the heirs of said Mark Barry (deceased), that I have this day served written notices on all tenants and other persons occupying, or in charge of the buildings and other property aforesaid, in substance as above, as applicable to

each individual. And I have in person entered upon and taken possession of the property.

"You are further notified that your services in connection with the property will be dispensed with, from and after this date, and you are requested to send to me at your earliest convenience a full statement of account since date of conveyance to me as aforesaid.

"RALPH SKINNER."

As the gentleman perused the letter, a puzzled expression came on his face, and, when he had finished, he began again going carefully over, and still again scratching his head and stroking his beard nervously. As he finished the third perusal, the junior partner entered with a slam and bang of the door which aroused the gentleman from his confused meditations. He handed the letter to the other rather excitedly, for one usually so cool and self-possessed, saying, "See here George, here is a hard nut for some one to crack. Just read that, and then rub your head for ideas as I have done the past twenty minutes." Then, as the other drew the letter from its envelope and began to read, he muttered confusedly. "It is strange, passing strange, I can't for the life of me understand it. It can not possibly be true, and yet—and yet, Ralph Skinner never indulges in practical jokes. He is always grimly in earnest, thorough and accurate, therefore he has made no mistake in date or otherwise."

"What! What *does* this mean?" said the other, as he laid down the letter and whirled his chair around, facing his partner's. "I should say it is a hard nut to crack, a puzzle with many false slips and turns." Then he turned to the desk, plunged his hand into a drawer, brought out a package of letters, and began handing them over, and carefully reading the endorsements. "There," he said, as he drew one from the package, "I was

quite sure of it; yet it is dated September 22d, from Mark Barry. Here, look at that (handing the letter to his partner), you doubtless remember this, but if you have forgotten it, here it is. How can any body possibly reconcile the plain instructions there given, with Skinner's notice?"

"Sure enough," replied the old gentleman, scratching his bald head (a habit when puzzled), "this is what I was trying to remember—the date of this letter—didn't know where to look for it, but here it is in plain black and white, in Barry's own hand-writing. Instructions in reference to that identical property, and in direct conflict with ——" Here he paused in the middle of a sentence (another habit), handed the letter to his partner, and added, dreamily, as though confidently addressing a third person, "But Skinner never jokes, and makes no mistakes. It was, doubtless, Barry's error in date. He was a careless body, never knew ——" At this juncture the door opened and Judge Dudley entered, saluted the gentlemen with a pleasant good-morning, sat down at the desk on the opposite side, and began to examine some papers.

"Judge," said the senior, "we have had a surprise this morning, and still flounder in the meshes of the net."

Judge Dudley laid down his papers, turned around from his desk and inquired, "What is it? Can I be of any service to you?"

"Perhaps so. In any event, here is the matter in a nutshell," said the senior, handing Skinner's and Barry's letters to the Judge. A few minutes of silence followed, during which Judge Dudley carefully perused both letters, folded and returned each to its envelope with care and precision, leaned

back in his chair, passed his hand over his forehead thoughtfully several times, and then said, slowly, as though each word as uttered was being weighed in the exact scale of even-handed justice, "There is a remarkable inconsistency here. Is it not wonderful how Skinner has managed to amass such wealth. He keeps his funds closely invested, not a penny idle, mostly in real estate, and here is the puzzle, or at least an important part of it. He has not sold any property recently, nor mortgaged any that I am aware of, and I always endeavor to keep informed in reference to such matters, and I believe there are no such entries on the records, business men don't neglect such things. And here, according to his statement, we find that he has recently purchased *for cash*, the whole Barry Estate in Chicago. He states that the date of conveyance is the 17th of September, and here is Barry's letter to you dated September 22d, instructing you to attend to certain repairs and improvements. It is singular also that Skinner should not have taken possession of the property at once, and I can not understand why he should allow more than three months to pass before so doing. It is a puzzle indeed." Then followed a few moments' silence, during which each seemed busy with his own thoughts, and then, as he handed the letters to the senior, Judge Dudley remarked, "It is truly a puzzle, and yet, I presume, when all the facts appear, you will find it all right. Skinner is equal to almost any emergency, and if he wanted the property, and it appears he did, else he would not have purchased it, he had only to sign his name to get it, as his note is perfectly good for more than double the amount, if he does live in a garret and starve

and freeze. However, I am in quite as much of a dilemma as yourself, in reference to it, as touching a case in which I am voluntary and gratuitous counsel. I alluded to the case of Mrs. Worsham, just entered, and which I had planned for to-day's business. The lady and myself were children together, playmates and schoolmates. I was cognizant of her husband's misfortunes and experienced deep regret at his melancholy death, leaving his family in almost destitute circumstances. When I heard of Mark Barry's decease, I offered my legal services to her gratuitously. I feared she might fall an easy prey to some designing pettifogger, for, as a rule, lawyers are unconscionable in the matter of fees, grinding the very last penny from their dearest friends, and therefore to shield her from sharpers, I have undertaken the business for her; but my services will probably not be required, since there is no property to which (as it appears from Skinner's letter) Mark Barry had any claim whatever. But what Barry did with the money he received from Skinner, is another mystery. He certainly did not have it on his person when he fell overboard, as no business man would carry that amount of money, particularly careful, prudent Mark Barry, to save a few dollars' express charges, and I find that there is but a small credit balance in bank in Buffalo, and no account here. However, it is decidedly unprofitable to discuss the subject without additional facts, and I presume I had better call at the Recorder's office. Perhaps Skinner's deeds from Barry are still there, and if so I will examine them. In any event I will examine his title as recorded, and in the meantime please make no reply

to his communication. I will advise you further to-morrow."

Then he closed his desk leisurely, after having put each paper back in its proper place, arose, put on his overshoes, great coat, fur muffler and gloves, stood a moment at the door, with hand on the knob, hesitated, looking down at the bright figures of the carpet, and finally said, slowly, and with peculiar emphasis: "Just let the matter rest so until I return; I will give the matter thorough investigation, and inform you of the result as soon as possible. I may possibly not return to-day, but the matter will keep until I do, and there can be no necessity for hasty action. However, you may as well prepare to comply with Skinner's demands, you can have the account made out, and when I report the result of my investigations, you will be in a position to act promptly and decisively, as the circumstances may require." Then he passed out, into the main office, thence to the street, walking leisurely, saluting politely this gentleman and that, this plain hard-handed mechanic, that brisk, covetous merchant, this honest and worthy hod-carrier preparing to ascend the ladder with his load, that bloated, well-kept, haughty millionaire, and this thinly clad, shabby, honest working woman, hurrying along with her heavy bundle of clothing, to receive the miserable pittance for her toil from her miserly employer.

Presently he arrived at the Recorder's office, entered and requested of the chief clerk, permission to examine the records. With obsequious, cringing and servile deference, the chief clerk immediately produced the books, saying as he placed them in regular order on the long table:

“Can I be of any further service to you, your Honor?”

“Call me Mr. Dudley, please; plain Mr. Dudley. No, thank you; I only wish to examine a tittle,” he replied, and began turning over the leaves of the record book. But the fellow still stood at Judge Dudley’s elbow bowing and grimacing like an opera singer in the green room expecting momentarily to be called before the footlights—stood scraping his feet on the matting and trumpeting through his nose into a delicately perfumed silk handkerchief.

Judge Dudley was evidently annoyed by the fellow’s pusillanimous cringing, and while he could not conceal his feelings of disgust, spoke kindly as he looked around at the dancing puppet, saying, “Thanks, you may return to your duties now, I shall require no further assistance.” Then he bent over the records again, running his finger down each column slowly, examining each entry, and with his other hand holding his glasses before his eyes. Thus an hour passed, during which there was profound stillness in the office, broken only by the ticking of the clock on the wall, and the swift and steady scratching of pens on record books. Intellectual and moral excellence is ever recognized intuitively, and so the quiet majesty of that aged gentleman awed into respectful silence those vulgar, shallow, cringing, human tools and political manipulators. Each felt the strong magnetic influence of a great mind operating as a battery the infinitesimal lines of thought radiating from a grand center and entangling in its meshes all within its circumference; though no word had been spoken, no look or gesture given, all felt the command, “silence!” and obeyed.

Scratch, scratch, scratch, sounded the pens, and those human machines cringed and bent over their books, while the office boy cowered down in his chair behind the stove, casting furtive glances toward Judge Dudley, as he patiently bent over the record books, following the lines with his finger, and occasionally making entries in a small memorandum book. Finally a quick footstep echoed in the hall, and a spry little gray-haired man came into the office with a slam and bustle, and began to take off his overcoat as he advanced saying: "Well, George!" Observing Judge Dudley, who had straightened up and stood with spectacles in one hand and the leaf of the record book in the other, looking toward him smilingly, the little man instantly slipped back into his overcoat, having only partially wiggled out of it. He staggered backward, as from a blow, reeled against the half-open door, which closed with a loud noise, and brought up bang! against a desk against which he leaned, and went through a series of idiotic grimacings, shufflings and bows. Finally he mustered sufficient courage, and approached Judge Dudley, who greeted him kindly, feelings of disgust and opposite inclinations to the contrary notwithstanding, and said: "Mr. Slink, I have been examining the records relative to the Mark Barry property, and find recent transfers to Ralph Skinner. Have you returned the deeds to him yet?"

"No, sir," was the reply. "The deeds are here. George! bring deeds of Barry to Skinner, left for record yesterday!"

The chief clerk slipped from his stool at the tall desk, shuffled around tremblingly, found the documents, delivered them to Judge Dudley, cring-

ingly, returned to his desk and made his pen fly over the paper, in his excitement and eagerness to appear very smart and efficient. Visions of official greatness, through Judge Dudley's influence, flitted over his bewildered brain, and he felt a thrill of official pride, a dawning of new and greater self-importance, an elevation of personal dignity, and he frowned savagely over the desk at his underlings, nodding his head in pantomimic command to work faster.

Meanwhile the Recorder, having removed his great coat and overshoes, sat down at his private desk and began to write, and profound silence again reigned, while Judge Dudley, much to his relief was left to examine the documents quietly, and at his leisure. First he read the deeds carefully from date to notary's seal and certificate, pondered over each sentence, frequently consulting his memorandum book in which he had made minutes from the records, and so an hour passed, during which no word had been spoken.

Finally, with a sigh, expressive of disappointment and regret, he began folding up the documents, one by one, when suddenly, as he glanced again over the last deed, he started and half arose from his chair saying, excitedly, "Why! that is not Mark Barry's—! ahem! that is—I was about to say—ah!"

"What did you remark, Judge?" inquired the Recorder, turning around from his desk and putting down his pen.

"Nothing very important," was the calm reply, accompanied by a singular smile—very much like a smile expressive of triumph. "I was only thinking aloud, a chronic habit—quite annoying to others as well as myself. Pardon me for disturb-

ing you.” As the sound of his voice first broke the profound stillness, there immediately followed in consequence, a shaking and quaking and the dropping of pens on the floor from nerveless trembling hands, and each clerk slipped from his stool diving down in one time and motion, and up again in same manner, grasping in their ink-besmeared hands their truant pens, and, mounting their stools in same time and motion, just as any other perfect machinery would perform its work, and began scratching away on their books as before.

During the temporary confusion which Judge Dudley’s exclamation had produced, the Recorder sat stamping his foot and calling out to the clerks authoritatively, “Less noise! silence! silence there!” and when quiet was again restored, Judge Dudley again unfolded the deeds and examined the signatures carefully, comparing each with the others, and again with one in his memorandum book.

He had evidently made a discovery, for he was nervous and excited—something so very unusual in him—the stern, self-possessed Judge, who had, during many years of official life, schooled his impulses and trained his nerves into quietness and obedience to his will. Yes, he was excited, and while pens scratched and danced over paper, and the clock on the wall ticked loudly the passing moments, he leaned over the deeds spread out on the table before him, comparing the signatures thereon with one in the memorandum book which he held in his trembling hand.

CHAPTER XII.

SOME DRAMATIC INCIDENTS.

In the dusk of a stormy winter evening, as street-lamps were being lighted in the Garden City and people were hurrying homeward, a woman, closely veiled, and clad in worn and faded black, alighted from a handsome sleigh in the southwestern portion of the city. Snow was falling in fine flakes, damp and heavy, falling thick and fast, and a strong north wind drifted it over pavements in hillocks and ridges, blocking the way against vehicles and pedestrians. Howbeit, she struggled along through the deep snow half a square, paused before a small neat cottage and rang the door bell. Her summons was answered by the lady of the house, Mrs. Worsham, to whom she said in a gleeful, affectionate tone:

“Good evening, mother, dear; but it is not a *good* evening, on the contrary a *very bad* one out of doors. How it snows and blows! Did you ever see the like?”

With an exclamation of mingled delight and surprise, Mrs. Worsham grasped the hand of the visitor, drew her gently into the hallway and closed the door, and, as she assisted in the removal of her wrappings, inquired in an anxious, excited tone:

“Why, darling, how did you get here through this dreadful storm?”

“I came,” replied the lady, “in our sleigh as far as the corner down yonder (bowing her head in the direction) as far as the horses could come on account

of the snowdrifts in this street. Why, they are miniature mountains. Where is Grace?"

"She has not yet returned home from work, but will come presently; it is only eight o'clock. Poor child, she will have to come all the way on foot, with the snow beating in her face, and struggle through the deep snowdrifts; but then she is young and strong and brave and self-reliant. Come in, dear," and Mrs. Worsham conducted the visitor into the neat little sitting-room, where a cheerful coal fire in a grate lighted up and cast a ruddy glow on the walls and ceiling, and upon the handsome, but worn, upholstery. An air of neatness and refinement pervaded the apartment, notwithstanding the somewhat dilapidated condition of the furniture, and the many ingenious devices which had been employed to disguise its true condition and to cast over all an air of respectability and comfort. The effort had been quite successful, at least so thought the visitor, as she sat down before the fire, and glanced around the room, while Mrs. Worsham went out to bring a light. The lady had made the same mental survey of that apartment many times before, as she had been a frequent visitor at the Worsham cottage, and on each occasion she had discovered some new and ingenious homelike adornments to add to the comfort or convenience of the apartment.

"How low they have fallen," she said, in a low musing tone, full of regret and feeling. "Well do I remember their beautiful home on the avenue. Poor little Grace—proud, self-reliant, brave little darling—too proud to accept my aid, lovingly proffered many times even with tears. What a noble spirit, what a brave soul!"

Mrs. Worsham's entrance with a lamp at that moment put an end to her further audible meditations, but the visitor continued to think and to regret.

Mrs. Worsham placed the lamp on the center table, turned up the wick, and as she sat down before the fire for the first time observed the peculiar apparel of the visitor, and gave vent to her surprise in the exclamation:

"Why dear, what does this mean? Why in this ridiculous disguise—this masquerade costume. Merciful saints! faded common black worn almost to frazzels—What—*What can* it mean? There—there," she added quickly, as a grieved expression came on the other's face, "there, there, dear, don't be grieved at my hasty words, you know I never mean to be unkind. I was surprised, that is all, and spoke without thought. And darling, have I not the right to chide you for your good, the sacred right of a foster mother? When your own dear mother closed her eyes in death as you opened yours for the first time in this life, did I not, standing by her bedside and holding her cold beautiful hand in mine—promise to be a mother to you always? As you know, Grace was scarcely a month old, and I took you to my home, not a home like this, no, no, not like this, and I nursed you at my breast, and cared for you as my own dear child, and lulled you to sleep in the same crib with dear little Grace. But enough of this—you know it all—all, all, and you know I love you dearly—fondly, second only in this world to my own dear child. Dear child I do not speak of this to arouse in your heart sentiments of gratitude to me, for I know it is full already even to overflowing, but I want to remind you of the claim I

have to your forbearance—even forgiveness, if in my anxiety for your well-being and happiness, I chance to permit my sometimes unwise lips to utter words which grieve you.”

As she talked in low, soft, tremulous tones, Mrs. Worsham had drawn her chair close to that of her visitor, and had gently placed both arms around her neck, and gazed into her face with an expression of tender wistfulness. As she talked and gazed upon the face before her, Mrs. Worsham, as on numberless similar occasions, experienced a thrill of admiration, for it was a divinely beautiful face, and from whose dark, languid, drooping eyes tiny tear-drops came, one by one in quick succession, the only indication of emotion, for she sat perfectly still and silent.

“Mother!” and the beautiful head sank down until it rested on Mrs. Worsham’s shoulder. “Dear, faithful loving mother, may God bless you for all—” She could say no more, for the spirit of affectionate gratitude filled her heart and in pity sealed her lips.

“He *has* blessed me abundantly. I have lived long with peace and joy as my perpetual guests. I have endeavored to faithfully perform every task, and to fulfill every duty without a murmur, and I have the inward consciousness of His loving approval of my life’s labors. There, there, do not try to talk, for you can not now, I well know what you would say.”

“Mother,” and the beautiful head was lifted from Mrs. Worsham’s shoulder, and its beautiful eyes, softened and mellowed by heart dew, gazed earnestly upon that withered though kind and lovely face, and into the almost sightless eyes of Mrs. Worsham.

“Dear, kind, noble mother, do not say that your lips have ever been unwise, or that they have ever uttered ought to grieve me. No, no, you have always been loving and tender and good to me; a mother in spirit and in deed to a wayward, orphan child, who otherwise would have been lonely and desolate in the midst of a great human tide, and who might have suffered and perished from neglect and want midst luxury and abundance. You kept the feeble life within my frail body with the sustenance of your own, and in sickness watched over me with sleepless eyes and loving solicitude when all else of earth slumbered. But for your loving, watchful care I might have been drawn into the awful whirlpool of moral depravity and death. Whatever of goodness and purity there is in my heart, and whatever of excellence there is in my nature is but the fruit of the seed sown there by your wise and loving spirit. Oh, mother, dear mother, why will you not permit me to fulfill my duty to you? Not duty cold and stern, but of that quality which is the offspring of love and gratitude. Why do you compel me to live alone, with only dear father in that gilded prison, when your continued presence there would convert it into an earthly paradise. Many, many times, dear mother, I have beseeched you, even on my bended knees, to come and share our comforts and our abundance, and dear father has as often added his eloquent entreaties to mine, and yet on every occasion you have sternly rejected our proffered tribute of love and gratitude—what, weeping? Dear mother, do not weep. Forgive me if I have said ought to grieve you,” and she sank down upon her knees and tenderly grasped the withered, toil-worn hands of Mrs. Worsham and

kissed them, and looked up beseechingly into her face. Tears flowed down that lovely, time-furrowed face, beneath its crown of silken, snow-white hair, and a moment of painful silence ensued, broken only by the gentle ticking of the clock on the mantel, and the wind whistling to the night and storm without.

A moment only—only a moment of powerful silent interrogation, and Mrs. Worsham had recovered her self-possession, wiped away her tears, and, looking down into that beseeching, upturned face, said, tremulously :

“No, darling, no; do not say that I have sternly rejected your proffered tribute of love. Do not kneel, but sit here by my side; there, that is better. No, daughter, not *me*, but Grace. I could not share your home without fatally wounding her self-respect and annihilating her self-reliance, and thus humbling her proud spirit. I could not take her there as a helpless dependent, and you would never have permitted her to perform any service in recompense to you. Hence, I have never broached the subject to her save once, and she, poor, patient, faithful soul, has never given the matter a second thought. But why this queer, ridiculous costume? I—”

At that moment the door bell rang, and without finishing her inquiry, Mrs. Worsham arose and left the room to answer the summons.

It was Miss Grace at the door, and, as she entered the hall she received the loving embrace and joyous welcome of her mother.

“Oh, I am so glad to get home, Mamma,” she said. “It is an awful night; the snow is very deep and drifting before a furious north wind. I thought I should

never get here, but I came by the market and bought some—”

“Hush, darling,” interrupted Mrs. Worsham, in a mysterious whisper, at the same time taking the package from her daughter’s arms. “There is a lady in the sitting room who has just called.”

“Who is it — anybody I know?”

“Her face is very familiar,” responded Mrs. Worsham, evasively. “Leave your wrappings in the hall and go in at once; you will find a good fire there. Thanks to our unknown, but kind and generous New-Year friends, I will put this package where it will not freeze, and then retire, as I am very weary. You took supper with Mary?”

“Yes, Ma, as I had promised her to do, you know.”

“Yes, and so I had my tea and toast early, and will now retire; good night.”

“Good night, Mamma dear,” and Miss Grace, hastily removed her wrappings, while Mrs. Worsham passed into the dining room and closed the door noiselessly behind her.

“Good evening, madam,” was Miss Grace’s timid greeting as she entered the sitting room and approached the visitor who still sat by the fire in the precise attitude which she had assumed when Mrs. Worsham went out to answer the door bell. She had turned her back to the light, thrown a veil over her head, drawn it down so as to partially obscure her face, and assumed a posture of deep meditation. As Miss Grace entered the room, she sat perfectly still and made no reply whatever to her greeting. Somewhat abashed by the singular demeanor of the strange lady, Grace approached nearer and was about to speak again, when

a sound like a suppressed sob broke the stillness, and she exclaimed excitedly, "Why, what can be the matter? Madam, are you ill?"

With a sudden graceful movement the lady arose to her feet, cast aside her veil, turned toward the light, held out her arms, and from her lips burst forth a merry peal of laughter.

With a faint little cry, expressive of delight, Miss Grace sprang forward and was quickly enfolded in those loving, outstretched arms.

"Why, you naughty dear, thus to disguise yourself and frighten me so. Why, what on earth ever put it into your head to appear before me, or indeed anywhere, in that horrible guise? In that old, worn and faded black dress—ugh—it is horrible! And yet, you are pretty and interesting. Upon my word, I don't believe that any costume, no matter how old and ridiculous, can mar your matchless loveliness. Oh, what a joyful surprise! When did you come, and how on earth did you get here through this dreadful storm?" And so Miss Grace talked on with lightning rapidity, propounding question after question without waiting for an answer, as with flushed face and eyes sparkling with delight, she stood closely clasped in the arms of her friend, and gazed affectionately upward into her face.

"Peace, peace, little one, peace!" said the visitor, when the storm of Grace's greeting had somewhat abated. "Be quiet and listen, while I answer some of your questions. I came about an hour ago in our large cutter to the corner out there, and then literally plowed through the snow the balance of the way. But you have not asked me *why* I came through this

dreadful storm to-night, and when I tell you, that will explain this comical disguise which has so shocked the nerves of our dear mother and yourself. Now, dear little sister, attention, and I will explain all. Yesterday morning I received your letter."

"Ah!" gasped Grace, "I had almost forgotten that in the joy of meeting you."

"Peace, little one, until I have finished my explanations. Yesterday I received a very loving and interesting letter from you, and I came to-night to save you, my sister, from a living death."

"Why, Kitty darling, what *do* you mean?" inquired Grace in a frightened tone.

"This, darling, plainly and briefly. Charles Barry is a moral leper, a gambler and a companion of murderers and thieves. He is utterly lost to all sense of shame, utterly abandoned to vice, a moral shipwreck and a dangerous man. One year ago last night I promised to become his wife, and I dearly loved him, for then he was good and pure. Since then the flames of sin have swept over his soul, leaving it scorched, blackened and depraved. Dear father made that dreadful discovery three months ago, and I immediately broke off the engagement. Yesterday I received this note from him by the hand of one of his former friends, who has been endeavoring to reform him," and she placed the letter in Grace's hand.

With white face and quivering hands, Grace Worsham took the letter without a word of reply, moved nearer to the light and began to read, while the visitor sank wearily down in a chair on the opposite side of the fire, folded her arms across her bosom and watched with painful sympathetic interest the record of thoughts as

written on that fair, young face. Grace Worsham read the letter, slowly and calmly through to the end, slowly and calmly folded and returned it to its envelope, arose, went over to where the visitor sat, placed the letter in her hand, knelt down on the floor beside her, leaned forward on her lap with clasped hands, and, looking up into her face said, calmly, "and sister, you granted him an interview?"

"Yes, dear, and he came at the appointed hour—came with scarlet eyes and swollen face, with the mark of sin upon his brow and his breath tainted with the fumes of hell; came with treachery and deceit in his heart and falsehood on his lips. Our interview was brief and our conversation to the point. I thought to be merciful and send him away kindly, but he was brazen and shameless, and I was compelled to unmask him. Then he became threatening and insolent, and I rang for the servant, whom I directed to show him out, and he went away, hissing defiance and terrible threats against me."

"And, dear sister, you had previously read my letter?"

"Yes, Grace."

"And why did you not come to me to-day?"

"Because I wanted to come *here* and warn you of your danger, and then confront the villain and make him sneak away from your pure presence like a thief caught in the act."

"It is well," replied Grace, with wonderful composure, for her nerves had been sorely tried. "Oh, faithful, brave, noble sister! How can I ever——"

Her words were cut short by the ringing of the door-bell, and as she arose to her feet, she threw her

arms around the neck of her friend and kissed her softly upon her lips, "He has come," she said, quickly, as she took away her arms. "His interview with me will also be brief, and our conversation to the point." She paused hesitatingly, and after a moment's reflection, added, "But dear I prefer to be alone with him at first, that I may also be able to unmask him. It is a solemn and painful duty, but it must be done. It is quite comfortable in the dining-room, and, dear, if you will step in there, I will call you at the proper time, by rattling the door-knob."

Again the door-bell rang, and violently, too, and with an exclamation of impatience, and just one more kiss, Grace Worsham hurried away to answer the summons. The visitor passed hastily into the adjoining room, but, woman-like, paused on the threshold, and, holding the door partly open, listened. She heard the click of the bolt in the lock, followed by a screeching of frosty hinges and a draft of cold air.

"Good evening, little chick," said a thick voice in the hall, "where's your mar?"

"If you mean my mother," replied Grace, coldly, "she has retired. Did you call to see her?"

"No, little bird; I did not call to see her, and don't want to see her, which is the reason why I inquired. Snow-bird, shall I call you? I presume that you know it is snowing. The wind is blowing big guns down on the lake, and the waves are breaking up the ice in the mouth of the harbor, and if the wind should shift around into the right quarter, a whole fleet of vessels will drift out to sea and go to the bottom."

"Yes, I know it is snowing, but I am not a snow-bird, and I will be obliged, Charles, if you will address

me by my proper name. As for the wind, I know it is strong, for I have tested its strength to-night, and as for the vessels in the harbor, and the possibility of their being driven out to sea and lost, 'God rules the winds and the waves,' and He doeth all things well."

They had entered the sitting-room and sat down on opposite sides of the fire, and, as they talked, he held his hands close to the glowing grate to warm them.

As she ceased speaking, he straightened up, looked steadily into her face a moment, and then said, in a quiet and more respectful tone: "What has happened, Grace? What have I said or done to displease you? I came here with a joyful heart, thrilling with fond hopes and bright anticipations, expecting a kind, even loving, greeting, but you receive me with calm indifference and with a cold formality, which chills my spirits and grieves me. Has anybody been poisoning your mind against me? You received my letter?"

"Yes," she said, coldly. "Yes, I received your letter."

"And, Grace, you read and carefully considered it?"

"Yes," she replied, in the same tone, "I read it all, and gave it all the consideration it deserved."

He arose and walked over to her side and stood silently looking down upon her with a troubled expression on his face. Several moments he stood thus, as though striving to read her thoughts, and then said, slowly:

"And is that all? Have you no kind and hopeful words for me? No sympathy with my fond aspirations? Oh, Grace, what a troubled life is mine, even in its early morning! When I should be sailing on a smooth sea and in bright sunshine under a cloudless

sky, I am in the midst of a fearful tempest with broken rudder and tattered sails. Near at hand through the blinding storm I see a safe harbor and a staunch lifeboat riding the gentle waves. Grace, dear Grace, your love is the safe harbor, and the lifeboat is your own dear self."

He paused a moment, irresolute, and then opened his lips to speak, when the door bell rang gently and Miss Grace quickly arose, and, without a word of apology, hastened to answer the summons. As she drew the bolt and opened the door, and the cold air came rushing in, Charles Barry ground his teeth together and bit his lips in vexation of soul. He heard a joyous exclamation from Miss Grace, and her cordial words of welcome; he heard a man's voice, low-toned to the music of sweet emotion, in earnest and grateful response. He knew the voice of that man in the hall, and its very tones which were hateful to him beyond everything else on earth, at that moment seemed to sting him to the very soul. Hastily, even savagely, he thrust his hand behind him and grasped the handle of a pistol in his hip pocket, but as quickly changed his purpose, and with noiseless tread, like a wild beast seeking concealment from which to spring upon its prey, he reached the door of the dining-room, swung it open and passed silently in, just as Grace Worsham and Leo Cassell entered the sitting-room from the hall. Miss Grace, who was a little in advance of Cassell, caught a glimpse of a human form gliding through the opposite doorway, and stopped short with a faint exclamation of surprise and dismay, but quickly regaining her composure she gracefully ushered in her guest, while a smile of intense amusement came upon her face.

As he closed the door behind him, Charles Barry stood abashed in the presence of a woman clad in a suit of worn and faded black, and whose face was closely veiled.

"Pardon me, madam," he said, confusedly. "I was not aware of any one being here; I—really, I—"

He had seen her soft, white, dimpled hand, and a thrill of admiration ran through his whole being.

"But," he added quickly, while a deep flush came over his face, "it is a very pleasant surprise to me nevertheless, and if your face is as fair and symmetrical as your hand, perhaps I shall never cease to bless the impulse and the moment which brought me to you."

Gliding nearer to her, he continued in a soft, insinuating tone:

"I am an enthusiastic admirer of 'nature unadorned,' and your beautiful white hand, with its lovely pink nails and charming dimples, unadorned by gems or bands of gold, thrills me with an indescribable longing, for what I can not tell, unless it be to clasp that hand in mine and feel it throb and flutter there. I would like much to lift the somber veil which hides your face, as morning mist obscures the face of the sun, for I know it is fair. Such a lovely, graceful form and majestic presence must surely be crowned as in harmonious keeping with the face of a very goddess." Little by little he had glided toward her, as she stood mute and motionless, and, as he uttered the last word, he stood very close before her and took her unresisting hand in his. It was warm and soft, and seemed to flutter in his palm like a tiny bird in the grasp of its captor, and its delightful quivering was to his

tensioned nerves like the vibrations of an electric current.

"Now, darling," he whispered, "will you not remove your veil, that I may see your lovely face?"

She did not move, she did not speak, she scarcely seemed to breathe. Suddenly she withdrew her hand from his grasp, raised it to her head, drew back the veil from before her face, and in silence turned toward him, with white lips and gleaming eyes.

One glance was quite enough for Charles Barry; one swift glance, and he reeled backward as though the floor had suddenly given away under his feet, and he would have fallen but for a chair which he grasped and leaned on. Several moments he stood silent and motionless, swaying to and fro, his face white as marble and his eyes glassy and expressionless, and then a sudden light dawned within them; they glowed brighter and brighter until they flashed forth in a fiendish expression of mingled hate and defiance. Then his voice found utterance, and he hissed forth in passionate tones:

"I am satisfied, quite satisfied, Kate Dudley!"

He stood near the door which had sprung ajar, and he heard Leo Cassell in the sitting-room, say to Grace Worsham:

"I have something of importance to say to you, Grace, something which may concern vitally your future happiness, and even the life of your nearest and dearest friend. It is my misfortune in matters of real moment to be plain and blunt of speech, and therefore, I labor under many painful embarrassments, as my motives are often misconstrued by those who do not know me intimately."

"That is right," said Kate Dudley, as Charles Barry approached nearer the door and assumed a listening attitude, "that is in perfect accord with your depraved nature; you are just the man to listen to the confidences of other people, but permit me to remind you of the fact that 'eavesdroppers rarely hear any good of themselves.' It is a good old maxim, and you would do well to bear it in mind, else you may become a living witness of its truth."

"How came you here?" he inquired in a husky half whisper, turning away from the door and glaring fiercely into her face.

"I came part of the way in my cutter, and part of the way on foot," she replied, with a cold smile.

"And for what purpose? To poison the mind of that foolish girl in yonder against me? I knew it—I knew when she received me so coldly, that you, fair soulless fiend, had been pouring into her silly ears the history of my misfortunes. You go straight and swiftly to your doom."

"As for your threats I do not fear them, but your conclusions are singularly correct, considering their source. 'A guilty conscience needs no accuser.' The quotation is very appropriate in your case."

He made no answer to her sarcastic reply, but it cut him to the very soul, and he again leaned toward the door and listened. Kate Dudley, even where she stood in the center of the room, could plainly hear Leo Cassell's words, as he spoke in a clear, distinct tone, for it mattered not to him though the whole world listened.

"I have given the subject serious consideration," he said, "and have been puzzled as to how I could broach

it to you, and at the same time escape the suspicion of intrigue—of how I could impress you with the fact of my entire personal disinterestedness as concerns any hope of reward or desire to place you in any degree under obligations to me. I wish to assure you, and I trust you will believe, that I am actuated solely by a sense of duty, and an unselfish desire to shield you from the machinations of a scheming, dangerous man.”

They were standing before the fire, Leo Cassel and Grace Worsham, and he held both of her hands in his own, while he gazed earnestly down into her upturned face, over which innocent surprise and apprehension alternately flitted, playing bo-peep among the charming dimples, and leaving behind them the rosy flush of anticipation.

“Though I have never told you so in words, Grace,” he said, “you can not but know that I love you. Still it is barely possible that you have not made that discovery, for I have endeavored to be very guarded in every respect. I have not designed that you should even suspicion my true sentiments in relation to you, because I am a penniless nobody, while you are young, educated, refined, pure and beautiful, and may with absolute certainty of success, aspire to a position in life which I can never, even reasonably, hope to attain. Therefore it would have been, and the conditions still remain unchanged—it would have been little, if any, short of a criminal design on my part to have even wished to be more to you than a faithful, honest friend.”

As he talked, in a calm, earnest voice, she stood with bowed head, her face wore a charming flush, and her

very soul was mirrored there. Her long, silken lashes quivered and glistened as they gathered the moisture of heart-distilled dew, and her bosom heaved and undulated like a tiny lake kissed by gentle zephyrs. Her warm breath, sweet as the perfume of wild spring flowers fanned his cheeks, and yet, although he was but a man with human instincts, passions and frailties, he stood in that almost divine presence as an iceberg in mid-ocean, rendered purer and better by the contact, though not insensible to the winsome voluptuousness of an August sun.

In the adjoining room, Charles Barry, with face close to the door, was muttering deep and heartfelt curses, while Kate Dudley remained standing in a graceful posture by the table in the center of the room indulging in scornful comments, and her words punctured his heart and caused him to flinch, as from thrusts of red hot needles into the flesh. He writhed under the torture of her words, ground his teeth together savagely, and flecks of bloody foam oozed from between his lips and fell upon his shirt bosom.

"I can trust you Leo," said Grace, still with averted face. "I know you are a true, noble man, and I honor you and value greatly your generous friendship. Tell me all frankly. Now, Leo, I am all attention," and she looked up into his face, trustingly.

"Your cousin, Charles Barry," responded Cassell, "not satisfied with having procured the assassination of his uncle and yours—Mark Barry—is now plotting with that same human monster whom he bribed to accomplish that cruel wicked deed—is plotting with him against your mother's life, in the hope of being able thereafter to degrade you to his level by inducing you

to become his wife. His prime object being to secure to himself your Uncle's entire estate, and he well knows that while your mother lives, that end can never be accomplished."

Charles Barry in the adjoining room, clutched with one hand the back of the chair on which he leaned, and with the other, sought the handle of the pistol concealed in his pocket, drew it forth, and, as Cassell paused, made a sudden movement forward and glared savagely through the opening.

Kate Dudley's quick eyes detected his designs in advance of his movements, and, quick as thought, she glided noiselessly to his side, and ere he was aware of her proximity, clutched his hand and wrung the weapon from his grasp. With flashing eyes he sprang toward her with clenched hand upraised to strike, but she silently pointed the cocked pistol at his head and smiled.

"Now I have told you all," said Cassell, as he released Grace Worsham's hands, "and I need only add by way of assurance, and to quiet your fears, if any, that I will do all in my power to shield you from his evil designs, to defeat his wicked plans, and to bring him and his vile companions to justice. Until that is accomplished, I shall be tireless—sleepless, and alike indifferent to the pinchings of poverty, and the plottings and menaces of fortune hunters and murderers. And now, good night. I have warned you. I have only done my duty, and may the good and kind Father of all, protect you, is my fervent prayer."

She followed him out in the hall, assisted him in putting on his overcoat, thin and worn, tied caressingly the tattered woolen muffler around his neck,

tucked in the ends neatly, toyed and trifled with his buttons, and then there was a gentle pressure of hands, a kind good night, and he passed out into the darkness and storm.

As the hall door closed behind Leo Cassell, Kate Dudley removed the cap from the pistol and handed it back to the man, who still stood by the door clutching the back of the chair, as though he would use it as a weapon to crush and annihilate all human kind. In his rage, he had gashed his lips with his teeth, and drops of blood trickled down his chin and fell on his shirt bosom.

"Go, now," she said, in a tone of withering scorn. "Go, now, vile human fiend, robber of virtue, wrecker of human lives. Go, murderer, perjurer, scheming villain, and find your level among your vile and loathsome companions."

With a horrible oath he snatched the weapon from her hand, dashed through the door into the sitting room, gnashing his teeth in rage. "I'll have his heart's blood," he hissed. "I'll teach the miserable dog to attend to his own affairs. I'll——" Grace had thrown her arms around his neck and began begging piteously for the life of her faithful friend. "Would you murder a defenseless man?" she asked, in pathetic tones. "Would you follow him like an assassin and without warning, and coward-like steal upon him and——" He thrust her rudely aside, rushed into the hall, and though he paused but a moment to put on his overcoat and hat, he heard Kate Dudley say, "Let him go, darling, don't fear, the villain will find only ignominious defeat at the hands of that brave true man. Yes, let him go to the defeat and humiliation, which awaits

him if he presumes to attack your friend under any circumstances. The man who can utter such noble words as Leo Cassell did to you, can be but honorable, faithful and valiant, though he be homeless, friendless and penniless. I'll answer for his courage, wisdom and discretion, and I'll insure his complete triumph."

Charles Barry waited to hear no more, but with curses deep and heartfelt he flung open the hall door and rushed out into the night. A furious storm was raging; the snow beat in his face and the wind whirled him along. The streets were dark and silent, the faint glimmer of street lamps barely discernible through the blinding snow-fall. Yet he ran like a deer pursued by hounds, ran through deep snow with wonderful speed, assisted by the wind and spurred on by that most relentless of riders, revenge. On, on, square after square, over the river bridge—ah! there was a form moving slowly along before him, a man shabbily clothed, struggling through snow drifts, and he laughed—even shouted in fiendish joy.

Finally he came to a harness shop from which a brilliant flood of light swept out over the pavement, and as he glanced up at the show windows he paused, hastily entered, and inquired of the man behind the counter, "How much for that?" pointing at a long-braided whip in the window. "One dollar," was the reply, and throwing down the money, he snatched the whip from the man's hand and hurried out.

That struggling form had gained but half a square and Barry could see him plainly, the street being well lighted from store windows, and he hurried on, lessening the distance between them every moment, until finally, before a saloon on a street corner, the two men met.

"Defend yourself if you can, or dare, miserable

slanderer," hissed Barry, "or prepare to be whipped like a dog, for vengeance has come upon you!"

"Who are you? and what do you want with me?" demanded Cassell, stepping back as Barry drew the whip from under the skirt of his great coat, raised it above his head and brought it down with terrific force, Cassell sprang backward, but not in time to escape the cruel blow, and the keen lash cut a deep gash down his cheek under his right eye. Barry held in his left hand his pistol, cocked and pointed at Cassell's head, while, with his right hand, he used the whip on the defenseless man with terrible effect, cutting the blood from his face and hands at every blow. The noise of the conflict brought the vile inmates of the saloon and adjoining shops out on the pavement, and they gathered around the two men shouting and jeering. Cassell retreated backward step by step, receiving the blows in silence, not even deigning to raise his hands to ward them off. But there was a strange gleam in his eyes as he watched his antagonist's every movement. Finally he paused, threw up his hand, caught the whip as it descended, and with a powerful wrench twisted it from Barry's hand. Instantly there was a sharp click, and the hammer of Barry's pistol fell upon the nipple, but, it missed fire, for Kate Dudley had removed the cap. The result was fatal to Barry, for the next instant Cassell sprang forward with the fury of a wounded tiger, and with the butt end of the whip delivered a blow on Barry's head which felled him to the earth as dead. Blood flowed from his ears and nose, and collected in a pool under his head, and in the excitement which followed, Cassell slipped away through the crowd and vanished in the arkness.

CHAPTER XIII.

PEEL EYE AND SNOOZER.

Michael Snoozer's Dew Drop Inn, at the Sands, was brilliantly lighted, that stormy winter night, and the caldron of sin boiled more furiously than usual. Around in the mazes of the dance whirled the painted ghosts and bloated demons, while the storm of passion and the howls of debauchery within, were in perfect harmony with the conflict of elements and moaning winds without.

There had been an election that day, and Michael Snoozer had driven to the polls, and voted his herd of human cattle, and, true to his promise, liquid hell was dispensed at the Dew Drop Inn, gratuitously and without stint, to his faithful followers. Since dark, there had been but one long howl of oaths, a continuous roar and jingling of beer glasses, and a steady thundering of dancing feet on a bare oak floor. Painted-faced women, blear-eyed, debauched and desperate, lost to all sense of shame, mere brutes in human forms, smoked cigars, drank poison and blasphemed, while the voting cattle, called men, whirled them around in lascivious movements, to which they misapplied the term, "*dance.*"

And the great man of the Dew Drop Inn, Michael Snoozer, was supremely happy that night, because he had reached the zenith of power and greatness toward which he had struggled year after year. He had steadily drifted toward that consummation—had mounted step by step, always maintaining his advance—

never retreating, until at last, with one supreme effort he had stormed and carried the heights. Yes, victory perched upon his banner, and the fickle goddess smiled upon him, for that day he had been created a ruler, even the ruler of a great city, to rule and drive to the verge of ruin a quarter of a million of people. So, there at the Dew Drop Inn, election night, his faithful followers were reaping the rewards of valiant service, and they, too, were happy.

Yes, Michael Snoozer was in exceedingly good humor. The India-rubber-like wrinkles on his face had been smoothed down by the warm iron of gain, and he leered and chuckled as he sat in his easy chair before a full grate of burning coal, in the sacred seclusion of the inner court of his council chamber.

The great bells of the city tolled out, through the blinding storm, the hour of nine, and as their last solemn echoes died away on the tempestuous bosom of the lake, there came a light, hesitating rap on the door of the council chamber, which broke the train of Michael Snoozer's meditations. That august personage stopped rocking, sat up straight in his chair, chewed his cigar vigorously, elevated his beetling eyebrows until the India-rubber-like wrinkles rippled over his forehead like the surface of a tiny lake swept by a sudden gust of wind, and glaring fiercely at the door, he opened wide his huge mouth, displaying his great slanting shovel teeth, and assumed the expression of a gorilla preparatory to the utterance of its fearful yell and charge to battle.

"Come in!" he commanded, in a voice but a trifle above his ordinary tone, yet similar to the roar of a lion when angered, "Come in, I say!" and he stamped

his feet on the carpet impatiently, struck the arms of his chair with his clenched hands, and by way of emphasis added a fearful volley of oaths to his command.

In obedience thereto, the latch turned hesitatingly in its fastening, the door creaked on its hinges as though reluctant to approach that formidable enemy—and what wonder, since its face bore many deep scars inflicted by his boot heels.

One, two, four, six inches it swung inward, stopped, and a head of bushy and matted hair was thrust through the opening, and a hideous bloated face with great bleary eyes and gaping tobacco-stained mouth, leered at the King of the Sands: “Did you say ‘come in,’ y’r honor,” said a voice, “or did you tell me to go to ——.”

“I said come in,” thundered Snoozer. “Ah! it is you, is it, Peel Eye, I didn’t know you.” And then he added, more pleasantly, “Come in feller, w’at’s th’ news—any, eh?”

“Well, I reckon a few,” replied Peel Eye, as he closed the door, deposited his old limp weather-beaten hat on the floor, and put his foot on it (a fashion at the Sands in token of entire submission to the authority of the great manipulator of elections, and proprietor of the “Dew Drop Inn”). “Yes, I reckon a few news, y’r honor,” he repeated, pulling his scalp lock and nodding his head toward Snoozer. “’Spect I can tell yez something w’at’ll interest yez. Howsomever, I’m tired, y’r honor.”

“Well, sit down, Peel Eye,” said Snoozer, brightening up, “sit down and chin it out. W’at’s th’ rip?”

"Well, I 'spect I've treed th' papers th' fust smell," was the confident reply.

"Ye 'spect! 'Spect!" chimed in Snoozer, impatiently. "Ye 'spect—eh? I don't want no more 'spectin' 'bout 't. If ye *knows* anything fur a fact, spit it out, facts is w'at I'm arter jes now?"

"Well," replied Peel Eye, "I can give yez w'at I hearn an' seed, an' if ye can claw out any rale meat from th' kettle o' bilin' bones, them things w'at yez calls *facts*, all right, an' I'll help yez do it all I can; that's all *I* can do, y'r honor."

"Well, that's all right, Peel Eye," replied Snoozer, softening a trifle. "Blubber out w'at ye hearn an' knows from w'at ye seed. Come now, don't beat th' bush fur words, but let 'em come fast. Idees is w'at I wants, an' lively too."

"Jes so," replied the other, opening his bleared eyes wide, and stowing away in his catfish mouth half a plug of tobacco, which he began chewing vigorously. "Jes so; an' here am th' whole matter biled down solid, *I sorter 'spect Sandy Burns aren't half so dead as ye thinks*, but is kickin' around as lively as a young cricket somewhar."

Michael Snoozer opened wide his little almond-shaped eyes, clutched the arms of his chair, partly arose to his feet, glared fiercely at the man who sat on the opposite side of the hearth twirling his thumbs and industriously chewing his quid.

"Truth, y'r honor, sure's y'r born, Sandy is livin' an' as lively as a hungry bed bug this minute, else somebody's lied t' me 'mazingly, an' I can't see nor hear wuth a chaw o' terback."

"W'at d' ye take me fur?" roared Snoozer, angrily.

"W'at d' ye take me fur? I say! Didn't I see Sandy Burns at the morgue, dead as a salt mackerel? W'at 're ye chinnin' about? Be ye gettin' loony?"

"Ye is mistaken, y'r honor; 't wasn't Sandy Burns as ye seed at the morgue, 'twas a feller named Mike Keary, w'at ye don't know, but looked jes like Sandy would, all bust up th' way he was. Ye see I got right down t' bed rock, right in th' center an' all around th' sides, an' if y'r honor'll 'scuse plain speakin' I'll make it all plain t' yez."

"Well, spit it out, Peel Eye," replied Snoozer, lighting a fresh cigar, "plain speakin' is w'at I wants."

"Well, then, t' begin at th' fust, I went straight from here t' th' w'arves, flopped over th' bridge, an' went skippin' 'long 'mong th' gin shops. Jes as I took in sail in front of O'Rourk's 'Shoo Fly,' an' was 'bout t' cast anchor, Lafe Whitcombe, Bottle-nosed Bill, an' th' two gals, Daisy Phelps an' Birdie McLaughlin came out o' that port under full sail, flags flyin' at topmast an' riggin' dressed in buntin'—Scram. 'Ship ahoy!' sez I, 'where ye bound?' 'Off on a bum,' sez they. 'Where away?' sez I. 'All aroun' th' coast,' sez they. 'Don't yez want t' convoy a treasure ship?' sez I. 'You bet,' sez they. 'All right,' sez I, an' away we went afore a spankin' breeze. We brought up fust at ole Rose Gaffney's, got a room, an' called fur th' swag. Blazes, how th' fellers an' gals did swill it. I chucked mine down on th' floor, tho' I was 'mazin' dry, but swillin' warent me objeck jes then, but t' fill up t' other uns an' git 'em t' chinnin'. Arter a while, w'en th' swill begun t' work, sez I, 'Fellers an' gals, I wish Sandy Burns was here; he's a jolly lad, an' 'ud make it right smart lively.' 'Who cares for Sandy Burns?'

sez Daisy Phelps. 'He's a sneak, an' I hate him. He punched my feller night afore last, an' th' poor boy is now in bed all bunged up.' 'Yes, I seed him this mornin',' sez Bottle-nosed Bill, 'over at Black Sculley's, chinnin' to Lize Whaley. He's mighty soft on that gal since he got away with somebody's blubber. He's been meller—more'n half seas over these two months t' my knowin', an' I've got no manner o' use fur him.' 'Well, fellers and gals,' sez I, 'If that's th' kind o' fish he's got to be I don't want nuthin t' do with him nuther. Let's have another lick o' swill an' then I must strike out fur another port. Got biz up town.' So we took a swig all round, 'cept me, w'at chucked it on th' floor, an' as I riz t' go, Bottle-nosed Bill sez, sez he, 'I tell ye fellers an' gals who was a good feller, an' th' same was Mike Keary w'at took too much o' th' red eye an' laid down on Lake street an' froze t' death New-Year's eve. He laid up there at th' morgue all New-Year's day an' nobody cared a straw. He looked awful, face all beat up; bin in a fight I 'spect.'

"Then I sailed away an' left 'em t' swill, brought up at Black Sculley's, went round 'mong the fellers and gals, but couldn't find Sandy nowhar. Arter a while I sidled up t' Lize Whaley an' chinned her fur a while 'bout foolishness an' sich. Ye see, y'r honor. Lize an' me ha' allers bin 'ticular friends, an' th' gal 'ud do anything fur me a'most. Well, I got her away by myself in a corner, an' I set up th' red eye handsomely, an' then sez I to her, sez I, 'Lize, d'ye love me?' 'Now Peel Eye,' sez she, 'ye knows I do. W'at d'ye ask that for?' "'Cause,' sez I, 'I wanted t' know if I could 'pend on ye through thick and thin, bitter an'

sweet.' 'Ye bet ye can,' sez she. 'Just bet y'r last check on 't,' an' then she gave me a dozen busses t' prove it. 'Well deary,' sez I (soapin' her, ye see), 'if ye loves me, an' I can 'pend on yez, through bitter an' sweet, thick an' thin, I wants t' ask ye a question 'bout suthin' w'at concerns me an' our master, Snoozer.' W'en I spoke y'r name, y'r honor, she turned sorter white round the gills an' looked at me right hard a minute. Sez I 'ole sweetness, y'r sweeter nor Belcher's best sugar; ye draws th' fellers t' ye as a leaky molasses barrel draws flies; y'r goodern or any angel. Now, I'm tryin' t' find out where Sandy Burns is, an' I wants ye t' tell me all ye knows about him. Fact is, darlint (an' then I squeezed her a bit), fact is, Sandy went out t' trap an' ole duck fur a feller, an' git some papers w'at th' feller wanted. Well, Sandy did th' job all right but didn't come t' time, an' he's been gone more'n three months now, an' th' feller w'at got him t' do th' biz is gettin' skeared 'bout th' papers, so he come t' Snoozer t' git him t' hunt Sandy up. Now deary,' sez I, 'do ye knows where Sandy has been?' an' I squeezed her again. 'Yes, I knows all about it,' she sez; 'he's been with me all th' time, an' has bin awful feared Snoozer'd find him. I swore I'd never tell, but I can't keep anything from you, dear Peel Eye. Mike Keary, w'at froze t' death on Lake street New-Year's eve, stole Sandy's clothes an' th' papers too, thinkin' they war money or suthin' waluable. Keary got in a fight with his boardin'-house man, got kicked out, an' took Sandy's sack o' clothes with him, an' had 'em when he laid down t' die. W'en Sandy hearn o' th' dead man at th' morgue, he went there t' see if it was Keary, but he took good care t' disguise, so that even

his sweetheart wouldn't have knowed him. Sure enough 'twas Keary; an' then Sandy begin to hunt around t' find out w'at he'd done with th' sack. He went t' where Keary had been found, but th' snow had all bin shoveled away, an' so he begin t' chin people w'at lived roun' there in the alleys. He chinned roun' all day, an' was 'bout t' give it up, w'en he thought t' ask th' boy at th' coal yard. He give the black imp a shin-plaster an' axed him if anybody had found a sack o' clothes anywhere roun' there, an' th' feller told him that ole Skinner's boy told him that he had found a sack full o' clothes in th' street New-Year's mornin'.' Well, y'r honor, I bussed th' gal an' promised you'd do the clever thing by her, an that you'd not go back on her, or tell Sandy she'd buzzed on him, an' I hope you'll see my word made good."

While Peel Eye talked, Snoozer walked the floor excitedly. His face, repulsive even in his pleasantest humor, was absolutely hideous as the man proceeded to unfold the history of Sandy's treachery, and when the story was concluded, Snoozer broke forth in a storm of anger truly appalling, thundering forth volleys of horrible imprecations, while he shook his clenched hand at an imaginary foe, and snapped his teeth together like a hungry wolf springing upon its prey. Peel Eye sat still, but his face gradually became white and he trembled perceptibly. His bleared eyes lighted up little by little until they gleamed like serpent's eyes, and his hand crept stealthily around under his tattered coat, and clutched the handle of a Bowie knife, which hung in its sheath on his hip.

Peel Eye thoroughly knew the desperate human beast before him, knew him to be absolutely insane

when angered, and, while he was conscious of having done his whole duty, and consequently not meriting reproof—while he knew that Snoozer when calm could not but be gratified, and would warmly commend his work, he also knew that the temporary maniac was liable to vent his rage upon any object, human or inanimate, within his reach, and instinct of self-preservation prompted him, unconsciously, to prepare for defense. However, to his astonishment and infinite relief, Snoozer stopped short in the middle of a sentence—stopped, and a horrible oath died on his lips, still-born. Stopped, smiled, lighted a cigar, and turning around to Peel Eye, extended his hand, saying, “Ye has done well, an’ I’ll see ye loses nothin’ by it. Shake hands pard, ye’re th’ right stripe, th’ kind o’ feller w’at suits me through an’ through. Ye can tell th’ gal that Michael Snoozer gives his word that he’ll not go back on her or tell Sandy that she buzzed on him. An’ mind ye, Peel Eye, if ye ever dare to break faith with th’ gal, ye’ll have t’ answer t’ me for ’t. Snoozer has passed his word now, an’ he’ll keep it. Tell her, too, that I’ll do clever by her if she’ll come t’ th’ Sands, an’ stay with us. She shall have money an’ plenty t’ drink, an’ a house t’ live in rent free. Here,” he continued, handing the man a bank note, “this is enough, I reckon, but if not, I’ll give ye more—eh?”

“Plenty, y’r honor,” replied Peel Eye, rising from the chair and clutching the money greedily, “Plenty, y’r honor—more than enough for sich a trifle o’ pryin’ around. W’en ye wants anything more, just let Peel Eye know it, an’ he’ll sarve ye true, faithful an’ yarnest.”

“All right,” replied Snoozer, “let the thing drop now, not a word t’ anybody, not even th’ gal. I’ll take care of it, good night,” and Peel Eye passed out, while Snoozer sat down in his easy chair, and settled himself comfortably to smoke, plot and sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

FOXLEY GRUBE'S FIRST VISIT TO THE "PALACE OF THE AVENUE."

Judge Dudley sat in his library in the "Palace of the Avenue," earnestly engaged in the examination of legal documents. His handsome, intellectual face wore a thoughtful, anxious expression, and his quick, nervous movements indicated that he was endeavoring to unravel some knotty legal snarl by the application of facts and logical deductions. He was evidently thoroughly in earnest, deeply interested, and bringing into action all the powers of his intellect, education and experience. He was marshaling his intellectual forces fearlessly against a fortress seemingly impregnable, hedged in by a moat wide, deep and bridgeless, while from the battlements above, a gaunt skeleton form arrayed in defense a host of accomplished ends and leered down upon him defiantly.

Judge Dudley frequently consulted a pocket memorandum book on the table before him, making entries therein with exceeding care, crossing each t and dotting each i as he went along, and then comparing each entry with some document at hand.

It was early evening, clear and cold, and the great city, in her white robes of winter, glittered in the silvery moonlight, and the ice-crested waves of the lake surged, foamed and came thundering in against the piers and breakwater.

Few were abroad that night, surely none for pleasure, and those who were forced by circumstances to brave the freezing atmosphere, hurried along at their utmost speed, as fleeing from some frightful danger.

As 8 o'clock rang out from the tall spires of the city, echoing over the lake and dancing in weird waves of sound on its ever tempestuous bosom, telling the hour to the ice-field and the wind, a lithe, handsome gentleman (?) went skipping along the avenue, performing the "Kangaroo Droop" and the "Boston Dip" to perfection, the intense cold and snow-drift obstructions notwithstanding. Pausing a moment before the gate of the "Palace of the Avenue," he looked up at the beautiful building bathed in the clear moonlight, and murmured his admiration to the howling wind, for his appreciation of the beautiful was ever keen and intense, and curved lines and symmetrical forms were always pleasing to his eyes. No matter what character, the form, quality or nature, anything symmetrical pleased him, from the graceful outline of a towering, cloud-battling monument to the exquisite and delicately molded form of beautiful woman. Therefore he paused even in the stinging cold atmosphere, and told his admiration to Luna and the stars.

At length, with a shiver, he grasped the latch of the iron gate, opened it, sprang up the terrace steps, walked briskly along the paved footway, passed up the broad stone steps into the vestibule, and rang the door-bell. His summons was quickly answered; he gave his card to the servant, was ushered into the reception-room and was left alone.

Foxley Grube stood in the center of the room looking around admiringly at the exquisitely carved and

beautifully upholstered furniture ; at the oil paintings on the wall, fresco work, statuary and other handsome ornamentations and gems of art ; stood spellbound, enraptured—mute, lost in a labyrinth of pleasant contemplations. The moments chased one another along the dial swiftly until half an hour had been added to the record of his life and a thousand thoughts, good and evil, jotted down by the just Recorder in the great book of human account. The harp strings of his soul were vibrating under the delicate touch of the beautiful, and he floated away on the bright wings of fancy. How long he would have remained thus, is a matter of extreme uncertainty, had nothing occurred to break the spell which bound him, but a slight rustling of garments (a sound never misconceived by susceptible and highly emotional organizations), and an opening door, though noiseless, and the powerful electric influence of a charming presence unseen but felt, sent a new hand sweeping along the harp strings, keyed to sensitive nerves, and sent the warm blood dancing through his veins in time to new sweet music. As the needle turns to the magnet when brought within its influence, so did Foxey Grube to the positive electric force which had glided into his presence unannounced and unobserved, and he swung around on his heels as the needle in the compass turns to the north, standing trim and straight as a soldier at “attention.”

Singular, how crimson his face suddenly became. Strange, that he stepped backward several paces and stammered apologies, and yet not so remarkable after all, for there, standing before him, was a beautiful woman, the most beautiful form and face he had ever beheld, a very Cleopatra.

Observing his hesitation and embarrassment, she smiled, as only she could smile, so bewitchingly sweet as to take the beholder captive at first glance, and entangle him in the meshes of a silken net woven by the cunning hands of the little love god, smiled and said in a tone, modulated and musical, "Mr. Grube, I infer from the card."

"The same, madam," he replied confusedly, bowing low, "but I presume the servant made a mistake and delivered my card to the wrong person, I called to see Judge Dudley."

"And I appear as his proxy," she replied, still smiling, "pray be seated."

"A very agreeable substitute," he responded, "socially regarded, but in a business sense I fear you will not answer."

"I presume not, if any very knotty questions of law are to be considered, as I have never sought to fathom the deep mysteries of the profession. Father is engaged at present, and sent word by the servant that he would be at leisure and could see you in the course of an hour, and, at father's request, I appear to entertain you," she replied, archly.

"The courtesy is appreciated, I beg to assure you," he replied, warmly. "It *is* rather dull to wait in such profound stillness, listening to the moaning wind without, and for approaching footsteps. You tread lightly, Miss Dudley, I did not hear you enter, and yet, I felt your presence and turned to find you here."

"Yes, when a child, they called me Kittie, because I walked so lightly, and, it appears, that a few additional years and increase of stature makes but little difference in that respect, as I still walk almost noise-

lessly," she replied, coquettishly. "As I entered, you appeared to be very deeply interested in that portrait, (pointing to one on the wall) I presume you have discovered in me the original?"

"Yes," he replied, musingly, glancing up at the portrait, "I have made that discovery since I have had an opportunity to compare, and yet, it is to the original assand to gold—it does not do you justice, Miss Dudley. Perhaps, it is as perfect as any portrait could be, but there is a poetry and grace of motion, a subtle, charming influence in the living, breathing, thinking original, which the pencil of the artist can not copy."

And so the moments, golden-winged, jewel-crowned, love inspired, flitted, smilingly by, one by one, toying with heart strings, tingling sensitive nerves, and placing sugar plums of compliment and flattery between willing lips, to be breathed forth as melted, into willing ears. The hour, and even an additional quarter, had been jotted down by the sharp-sighted, sensitive-eared, grim Recorder, and each petty falsehood had been placed just there in letters of black, each truth just there in letters of light, and the pen was poised to strike a balance.

Foxey Grube had become so deeply enamored that time was not considered, for he was thrilled and enraptured by the music of a sweet, human voice.

Ah, woman! woman! thou art a charming fraud, a delightful, living, breathing false pretense, and yet, thou art as true as heaven and as real as life. Thou art a maze of bewildering contradictions, a wonderful combination of inconsistencies. Weak, yet strong; corrupt, yet pure; faithful, yet fickle; proud, yet

humble; vain, yet modest; scornful, yet loving—thy ways, like those of the Almighty, are past finding out. Thou art a riddle man can not undo, and so, he can only cross himself and bless thee, and thank God that thou art human.

Their conversation had been vivacious and interesting. Poetry, music, fashionable gossip seasoned with flattery and tinctured with sarcasm and wit, were the subjects discussed, and the grim Recorder scored a line and struck the balance as a rap came on the door. The servant announced that Judge Dudley would receive Mr. Grube in the library, and the latter reluctantly followed the messenger, bowing very gracefully to Miss Dudley as he left the room, and trying very hard, but in vain, to say something pretty, something she would remember and ponder over in the sacred seclusion of her boudoir.

Singular it is, but true, that when one most desires to say something wise or pleasant, it is quite impossible, yet for some reason which she could not clearly define, Miss Dudley was pleased with his last words, and pleased with him—not knowing his real character—and was elated by the conquest she had made. She could plainly perceive that he was deeply interested in her, and as he was of polished manners, highly educated and of refined tastes, she had become quite interested in him. She went from the reception room to her boudoir, assumed an *en negligé* attire, sat down in the willow rocker before a blazing coal grate, and, gazing dreamily into the fire as it curled and flashed up the chimney, the peculiar smile which took captive all hearts played among the dimples on her lovely face, and a soft dreamy expression came into her eyes.

As she sat there before the cheerful fire, in the sacred seclusion of her boudoir, her lovely form wrapped in a loose, thin mantle, and her long, silken, jet black hair floating down over her shoulders, she was, if possible, more bewitchingly beautiful than when arrayed in her most dashing toilet. She smiled continually, swayed to and fro in the easy rocker and floated away on the bright wings of fancy. And so the moments glided on while she pondered and dreamed, and a golden hour had joined its fellows in the treasury of the eternal.

Finally she sat still, passed her hand over her face to shade her eyes from the fire-light, heaved a little sigh, not plaintive nor sorrow-burdened, but a sigh of relief, turned her head aside, rocked vigorously a moment, and then burst forth in a ripple of laughter. Then she arose, went to her secretary, opened it, drew forth writing material, sat down and said mischievously: "I'll do it; write him a valentine. He'll never know the author, and what a surprise it will be to him. I'll play the rejected sweetheart just to confuse him. Now my muse—sweet muse—tune your harp. Ah, the inspiration comes," and she began to write:

"TO EDWARD GRUBE,
FROM
HIS VALENTINE.

"As turtle dove whose mate is dead
Doth sit and mourn on withered tree,
So from my heart sweet hope hath fled,
For thou hast turned away from me—
Yet, thou art mine, and only mine,
And I thy faithful valentine.

“As wounded fawn sinks down to die,
 A victim of the archer's skill,
 So doth my spirit fainting lie,
 A victim to thy stubborn will.
 Still, I am thine, and thou art mine,
 My wayward, scornful valentine.

“Ah, couldst thou know the joy, the bliss,
 That lurks within the holy kiss
 Of woman pure,
 Thou'dst come and claim this loving heart,
 And heal its wound by Cupid's dart
 With lover's cure.
 Say, thou art mine, and I am thine,
 And each the other's valentine.”

“Ah, that will do,” she said, laughingly. “I fancy it is not very bad machine poetry; however, I'll not venture to sit in judgment on my own composition. What gushing sentiment! Ah, me, he will scarcely survive it, I fear.” And she laughed with the gleeful innocence of a child with a new toy. Then she folded the epistle, put it into a rose-tinted, delicately-perfumed envelope, and addressed it to “Edward Grube, Addressed.” An hour later silence brooded in that sacred apartment, and fair Kate Dudley in spirit wandered in beautiful dreamland.

As Foxey Grube entered the library, Judge Dudley was engaged in arranging papers in his desk, but arose and greeted the visitor kindly, invited him to be seated, apologized for the delay, and then paused, evidently for Grube to explain the object of his visit.

“I have been informed,” said Grube, “that you are counsel for defendants in the case of Skinner against the heirs of Mark Barry, is it true?”

“Yes, I have undertaken, in their behalf, the management of the case.”

"As I understand it, Skinner seeks to establish his title by deeds in fee simple and warranty from Mark Barry to certain valuable property in this city."

"Precisely."

"And the defense claims that the conveyances are fraudulent, that is, that the signature thereto is not that of Mark Barry—having been forged by some person unknown, and therefore that the property must revert in title absolute to the heirs at law."

"Before I answer any more questions, I shall require you to answer one for me," replied Judge Dudley, coloring slightly. "You seem to be much interested in the case, and I wish to know the object of your interrogations?"

"I am glad to know," replied Grube, "that you have the management of the defense, Judge Dudley, because I am satisfied that you will be able to defeat the evil designs of a bold, bad man, and bring him to justice. Yes, I do take a deep interest in the case, and for several very good reasons. I hate Ralph Skinner, because he ruined my father financially, and left me a homeless, friendless, penniless orphan. I hate him, because whatever of evil there is in me has been nursed and fostered by him, that I might be a willing tool in his wicked hands. I hate him, because he drove forth, to the terrible temptations of want, his own sister, a fair sweet girl—drove her forth upon the streets of a great city, to sin or death, and the same night, Judge Dudley, the poor girl rushed to death, and found peace and rest in the lake. And now the villain beats, freezes and starves her child, and compels the boy to go about the alleys and sewers gathering rags and paper. Now I presume, Judge Dudley, you will be

able to understand why I am so deeply interested in the case."

"Yes, I understand now—but tell me, has the child no relative other than Skinner?"

"Only one, I believe—a Mr. Cassell, a first cousin, who, though an honorable, intellectual young man, is poor and homeless. He never goes near Skinner, for there exists a bitter hatred between them. However, Mr. Cassell does all he can, secretly, to better the child's condition, but it is very little he can do."

"And Skinner starves and abuses the child?"

"Most heartlessly."

"I will make it a point to look into the matter, and if I find your statement correct, of which I have no doubt, the child shall be taken from him immediately and properly cared for."

"Thank you, you will find my statements true in every particular. And now, in reference to the case of Skinner against the heirs of Mark Barry, I can give information that will insure Skinner's defeat. You are perfectly correct about the deeds having been forged, and I say of my own knowledge that Skinner forged Mark Barry's name to them and affixed the notary's seal. I saw him do it."

An hour later Foxley Grube passed out of the vestibule and down the broad stone steps of the "Palace of the Avenue," and hurried away toward his lodging-house. He had given Judge Dudley a full history of the forged deeds, and as he hurried along through the frosty night his spirits were buoyant, and he felt that a great load had been suddenly lifted from his heart. "The old scoundrel will find more than his equal in

Judge Dudley," he said, "and I shall experience the pleasure of seeing him view the beauties of nature and contemplate the happiness of freedom from behind iron bars ere long, or there is no God and no justice in the land."

CHAPTER XV.

MICHAEL SNOOZER SNEEZES.

The day had been quite warm for the season, but a peculiar chilliness pervaded the atmosphere, rendering warm wrappings and furs quite necessary to comfort. Soft balmy breezes floated up from the south, the sky was clear and the sun smiled down on the snow-mantled city, ice-locked river, wave-battling lighthouse and harbor piers far out in the lake. As the day advanced, driving shadows eastward, the increasing warmth of sunshine and the soft south wind visibly effected the snow on housetops and along the streets, until miniature cataracts poured from water-spouts, drenching pavements, and street gutters became tiny rivers. Sewers complained dolefully, caught and held in their throats quantities of floating debris, while torrents, rushing on from every quarter, seeking an outlet to the lake, suddenly became confused, even within the sewer's mouth, rushed back and whirled around in cross currents and eddies, until each street-crossing was flooded, giving the fair daughters of the woman whose bridal robe was of green fig leaves an opportunity to display their trim little feet.

After sunset, heavy banks of leaden clouds arose from the lake, and, as night came sweeping on and sent forth her shadows one by one to drive back the lingering twilight, a dense fog floated slowly up from the south and enveloped the city in dense darkness.

On that gloomy night, as small stores and shops were being closed and the saloons were becoming lively, a short, broad man, wrapped in a heavy fur-lined cloak, extending far below his knees, walked slowly along Lake street, eastward. The street lamps flickered feebly, penetrating the fog but a few feet around, leaving a large portion of the street in pitchy darkness, and, consequently, people, as they hurried along, and particularly this large man, were compelled to pick their way very carefully to avoid falling down cellar-ways or stumbling over dry-goods boxes carelessly left on the pavement.

Frequently he paused and glanced up at the tall buildings, as though looking for a number, all the while whispering and mumbling broken, disjointed sentences, such as, "Well, that lets me out. They've put up so many new buildings here that, blast me eyes, if I aren't lost right on me old stamping ground. Ah, there it is!" he exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction, as he came within the light of a street lamp, and plunged out into the street, wading through the slush to the opposite side. "Yes, this the place, up these stairs," and he groped along the dark hall and began the ascent—up! up—up! flight after flight, until he puffed like a porpoise—up again, and he began muttering curses on any man who would live among the clouds, when everybody knew that if he had his just dues he would at that moment be an inhabitant of a lower region, sporting in blue blazes and breathing sulphurous gas.

However, the fat man looking up, as he ascended the last flight of stairs, observed a dim spot of light shining on the wall, and, as he reached the upper

landing, observed also that it came through a key-hole in a door. Approaching, he gave a loud rap and heard a shrill, tremulous voice, inquiring:

“Who is there?”

Again the fat man pounded on the door, louder than at first, and muttered, “Come an’ see, ye blamed ole fool.”

Instantly there were within the room sounds as of quick movements of some one hurrying around, the peculiar flap of slippered feet on a bare floor, and again came the shrill inquiry from within: “Who’s there, I say?”

“Come an’ see,” thundered the fat man in the hall. “Come an’ open the door, ye blamed ole fool, I wont bite.”

Ralph Skinner slowly arose from behind the chair of state where he had retreated, groveling down even with his face to the floor, staggered tremblingly to his feet, and on tip toe advanced, and grasping the knob in one hand, the key with the other, hesitated, made several movements as though about to unlock the door, but changed his mind, and finally putting his mouth to the key-hole again, called out the inquiry: “Who are you? What do you want?”

“I’m neither a burglar nor a policeman. Ye needn’t be feared t’ let me in, ole vinegar, as I’m a gent w’ats got biz t’ ’tend to with ye,” was the reply.

Those reassuring words seemed to quiet Skinner’s fears a trifle, and yet he hesitated, and stood with knees knocking together, grasping the knob convulsively, and swaying to and fro like a drunken man. Finally, with a spasmodic effort, he turned the key in the lock, opened the door, and as the fat man entered, sprang backward, exclaiming, “Snoozer!”

"Kerect," replied that individual, as he followed the crouching, shrinking form of Ralph Skinner back to that heat-proof stove. "Perfectly kerect, ole yaller jacket, it's Snoozer and no mistake. He's come t' have a little chinnin' with ye—'bout matters an' things in gineral an' some things in 'ticular." Glancing around the room and seeing only Skinner's chair of state, he added, with a grin, "Have a seat, Mr. Snoozer," and sat down on the table swinging his legs back and forth like a school-boy.

"Well," said Skinner, in a whining, tremulous tone, as he sank down in his chair, "Well, Mr. Snoozer, what can I do for you?"

"Hitch!" said Snoozer, snuffing and elevating his eyebrows, "hitch!" and his mule-like head drooped side wise while the corners of his mouth crept back toward his ears; "hitch," and the India-rubber-like wrinkles on his forehead began to ripple over its gnarled and knotted surface, while his long ears actually flapped back and forth as his little negro eyes started from their almond-shaped sockets, and his glance ran rapidly up the wall to the ceiling, where they seemed to fasten to a knot on a beam.

"Hitch!" he repeated, dolefully, "Hitch! chu!—chu—a-o-rechio—ah! hitch!—ah!—chow! chow! chow!"

He paused a moment, heaved a doleful sigh, wagged his head from side to side, while tears gushed from his eyes and ran down his face. Then he lowered his chin and looked toward Skinner, but, in the dim firefly light of the sputtering, complaining tallow dip, utterly failed to catch even a faint outline of his form.

"Ha-ah-oh-hitch!" he repeated, wiping his face with the back of his hand, "Hitch!"

"For heaven's sake, don't, Mr. Snoozer," pleaded Skinner, rising from his chair, glancing toward the door and then back over his shoulder toward the window. "For heaven's sake, don't, it is horrible."

"I—I can't—hitch!—I say—I—hitch! ah—o—rechio—ah—hitch! ah—chow! chow! chow!" and Snoozer's voice rang out in thunder tones, peal on peal along the beams and rafters of the roof, and came back in wild echoes from the depths of the great attic.

Again Snoozer straightened up, rubbed his watery eyes with his knuckles, drawing the palms of his hands down over his cheeks to wipe off the tears, cast a doleful look toward where he thought Skinner ought to be, and blubbered out in a thick voice, "I was 'bout t' say tha—" Again, his nostrils expanded, disclosing two enormous holes running back into his head, and he began snuffing spasmodically, chopping out between paroxysms, "I—can't—blast—eyes—cuss—catch—ah!" and then came an awful pause. There was a marshaling of forces for the awful struggle, during which his head wagged back and forth and swung around until it leaned over on his right shoulder, and his eyes again sought, found, and became fixed in a stony stare to the knot on the beam of the roof. Then again his eyes started from their sockets, and, raising his right hand above his head, his huge mouth sprang open, disclosing the two rows of long slanting shovel teeth, and he hissed forth, "Hitch! I—e—hitch! O—oo—hotch! Ah—chow! chow! chow!"

"Is that all, Mr. Snoozer," inquired Skinner, beseechingly, "Is there any more, Mr. Snoozer, if there is, can't you, you put it off until you get out in the street?"

"Allers fo-foo-four," sputtered Snoozer, "loo-l-lookout, he-here-co-comes-t'-t'other one-hitch!"

"Lord save us," moaned Skinner, thrusting his fingers into his ears and cowering down in his chair, "Merciful heaven defen—"

"Hitch!" howled Snoozer, pressing both hands against his sides, and rocking to and fro on his perch, swinging his legs violently. "Oh—hitch! d—m—me, hitch! ah!—cuss th'—hitch!—ah—luck. Hitch—o—rechio—ah—chow! chow! chow! his—c—pop! um!"

"That's all, Skinner," moaned Snoozer, "but Lord blazes it's orful. Why man, it jist creeps all o'er a feller like fleas, makes his hair snap like whip crackers, an' his toe nails strike fire. Blazes, but it tore th' bottoms o' me socks all t' smash, an started th' soles o' me boots from th' uppers. Did ye ever sneeze, Skinner?"

"Yes," replied the living mummy. "Yes, I sneeze very often, particularly when coal is dear and we can't afford to keep much fire, but then not in your way, only a little low 'hiss—c—hotch!' in a whisper, and only once."

"That goes t' prove," retorted Snoozer, disgustedly, "how blamed stingy ye ar', afraid t' spend y'r nat'ral forces, an' miserly wi' e'en y'r voice. W'en ye dies, an' that in the course o' natur' can't be very far off, d' ye 'spect to carry y'r houses, town lots, an' shin-plasters wi' ye? If ye does ye'll be durned badly disappointed, I'm thinkin.' Why, Skinner, they'll jest chuck ye in a pine box, dump ye into a hole in th' ground, cover ye up wi' mean stickey yaller clay, stick a pine board in th' heap an' leave ye t' rot an' fatten th' worms." Pausing a moment, he looked down through

the phosphorescent glimmering light of the tallow dip, on the ghastly upturned face and skeleton-like form of Ralph Skinner, and then his huge mouth opened in a horrible grin. "No, I'm a trifle off on that, ole leather-hide," he added, flapping his lips together like a horse chewing its bit. "Th' worms couldn't git fat on ye, cause there's nothin' t' eat 'cept cords an' dry leather, but ye'll spile all th' same an' stimulate th' wegitation around yez, as long as ye last. Howsomever that aren't th' biz I come t' talk about; an' I'll jest spit it out an' be done wi' it. W'at did ye do wi' them sack o' close an' papers w'at yer boy found jes across th' street there New-Year mornin'?"

Skinner's white face grew whiter, and he sat still and mute, looking up at Snoozer. His eyes were glassy—a film like that of death seemed to creep over them sweeping away all expression, and the muscles of his face twitched horribly while each feature came gradually out from its fellows, each a ghastly self-accuser. The jugular veins of his neck puffed out until they seemed on the point of bursting, and they throbbed violently until Snoozer might have counted the very pulsations of his heart. He scarcely breathed; his very life seemed to have fled when Snoozer's startling question with all its dread import sounded in his ears, and he was speechless with terror and amazement.

Snoozer's quick, unerring brute instinct grasped and fathomed, instantaneously, the secret of Skinner's trepidation and terror. He perceived that Peel Eye's report was true in every particular, and determined to wring from Skinner, either by intimidation or actual violence, the information he sought. As he sat there, looking down on the shriveled, ghastly face of the wretched,

wicked old man, a new idea gradually dawned upon him, and in detail he went from point to point, solving a knotty problem. He was learning to reason—putting this and that together, and dovetailing facts into probabilities, until a symmetrical whole loomed up before him—a case clear and positive, and he determined to use his knowledge as a lever to press the truth from the lips of the evil old man, or to crush out his life at the bar of justice. His knowledge he proposed to utilize to his own advantage, and solely for personal gain. He possessed no sympathy in common with human kind, no wish to bring an evil-doer to justice simply for the sake of righting wrong; he was utterly dead to all sentiment, and whatever he might do would be influenced wholly by selfish and mercenary motives. He revolved the subject in his mind, catching up thread by thread and grain by grain, until finally the alternative was reached, and his resolution was instantly formed.

Receiving no reply to his question, Snoozer smiled, wagged his head insolently, and said: “I ’spect ye didn’t hear me, Skinner—I ’spect ye didn’t hear me, eh? So I’ll put th’ question again:

“W’at have ye done wi’ th’ sack w’at y’r boy found across th’ way New-Year mornin’?”

Still Skinner was silent, and his glance sought the floor, and he cowered down in his chair, shiveringly, as though suffering from cold. Down, down he sank, lower and lower, until he seemed to have doubled into himself like a telescope, utterly crushed under an enormous weight. Snoozer remained sitting on the table, swinging his legs back and forth, seemingly forgetting his own question. He toyed with the lapel of his

great coat, lighted a cigar, and sat smoking contentedly, amusing himself with a pen-handle just as a boy would play, picking the dirt from the cracks of the table and knocking the letter signs from the burning wick of the tallow dip.

"*Skinner!*" and Snoozer's voice could have been distinctly heard the distance of a square, while he brought down his sledge-hammer fist on the table, making the old bottle holding the tallow dip leap upward and dance around, sputtering its surprise. Then came silence again, creeping, brooding, awful silence, while Skinner snored as in deep slumber, and Snoozer imagined he could hear the very pulsations of the miser's heart.

"*Skinner!*" and the miserable man lengthened himself in his chair, coming up like a cork thrust under water and suddenly set free, sprang to his feet, and with chattering teeth and quivering form, exclaimed in a husky, tremulous whisper, a very wail of terror, "For God's sake, Snoozer, don't!"

"Don't? Don't w'at?"

"Don't speak so loud, you startle me so, I—I am so nervous, I—I can't bear such loud talking, you will alarm people on the street and bring the police up here. I—I wouldn't have them come for anything—they look so vicious, so—so threatening."

"Jes so," replied Snoozer, chuckling and grinning viciously, "jes so, y're afeard o' th' perliece. Eh? I've seen fellers i' th' same fix afore now, an' it's mighty suggestive o' guilt. I don't know nothin' 'bout it from experience, cause I keeps me fly trap shut an' covers up me tracks so th' old un couldn't find 'em if he'd try ever so hard. But th'y tell me that it kinder makes a

feller feel all over in spots, like as if somebody was chuckin' pounded ice on y'r bare body, ye feels like a feller w'en his back itches, an' w'en he begins t' scratch, he diskivers that th' itchin' spot has skipped off t' some other place, an' w'en he tries t' corner it thar, it won't corner worth a cent, an' so he chases it around o'er his body till he itches all over, an' scratchin' don't do any good, whatsomever, so he jist settles himself an' cusses everything black an' blue an' t' all durnation. It's orful, I know, fur I've itched that way meself. It's equal t' a touch o' th' jim-jams. If ye feels that a-way about th' perliece, an' I guess ye does, by the way ye looks, I can give ye an unfailin' remedy fur th' disease. It's this, salt y'r intentions wi' goodness, so they'll keep, pepper y'r acts wi' honesty so they won't go back on ye an' git ye into trouble, an' ye'll skim along as smooth as a man in a balloon on a clear, mild day, an' th' perliece won't look so wicious an' threatenin'; that's my remedy, Skinner, tho' I 'spect I wouldn't take it myself. Howsomever, talk's cheap, ye know. But sit down, man, an' act like a human; quit y'r shakin' an' quakin'—an' breathin' so hard, an' answer me question square an' straight. *W'at did ye do wi' th' papers ye found in th' sack?* ”

“What papers, what sack?” whined Skinner. “You talk in riddles, explain yourself, Mr. Snoozer.”

“Well, if explains w'at ye wants, I can do 't in a few words an' t' th' pint. A jolly ole cub got on a steamer at Buffaler, t' come here, not very long ago, an' w'en half way over, he concluded, just fur a joke, t' take a swim in th' lake all by himself, so he got inter th' water kersplash! leavin' his carpet-sack wi' another feller who helped him overboard. Well, arter he'd bin in th'

water a while, th' ole fool took a notion that there was somethin' werry attractive on th' bottom, an' so went down t' see about 't. Well, th' steamer didn't wait t' find out w'at kind o' luck he had, an' as nothin's bin hearn of him since, it's s'posed that he's down on th' bottom there yit, chasin' round arter mermaids. Well, t' bite a long story off afore it gits tedious, th' feller w'at he left his carpet-sack with, didn't think it worth while t' hunt up th' ole feller's relations, an' so, arter cavoratin around more'n three months, th' papers w'at was in th' carpet-sack, got into a sailor's clothes' bag, an' th' owner o' th' bag went t' sleep New-Year eve by th' wall over there, an' didn't wake up i' th' mornin'. They had him layin' at th' morgue, an' then chucked him in th' ground. Well, th' pint is, y'r boy found th' sack arley New-Year mornin' an' brought it t' you, an' now I wants t' know w'at ye done wi' th' papers."

Skinner had listened in breathless silence, the muscles of his face twitching painfully, indicating the soul torture which Snoozer's words inflicted. He sat with averted face looking steadily into the clogged-up mouth of the complaining stove, and rubbed his thin bony hands together. When Snoozer had finished his revelation and again propounded the dreaded question, he replied in a hollow tone, "You still talk in riddles Snoozer, and are laboring under a grave mistake."

"Wait a bit before you commit y'rself too much, old joker. I know ye've a sly way o' funnin', but then I'm in yearnest, an' I'd rather ye'd toe th' mark square an towonst," replied Snoozer, as he drew from his pocket a newspaper. "Now here 's a regular stunner for ye t' consider, a rale knock-down argument, in favor of my 'pinion that ye knows whar th' papers are, an'

that ye've bin makin' use o' 'em t' y'r advantage. Now here," he continued, opening the newspaper and pointing to an article. "Now that says a good deal about ye. It says that ye've lately come into possession of th' whole Mark Barry property, by some hook or crook, an' I know it is by crooked crook, *I does*. Now, I'm goin' t' talk plain t' ye, Skinner, and then if ye don't answer me question straight, I'll make th' world so hot for ye that ye'll hunt t'other place t' get cooled off. Now here's w'at I knows: Y'r boy found that bag, an' ye found in it some deeds, mortgages and sich. Now thinks ye, I'll make a strike. Mark Barry is dead, and a dead man can't peach on a feller, so I'll fix things up this a-way; I'll jist make out some deeds an' sign Mark Barry's name t' 'em, an' swear he done it himself jist afore he played th' joke on th' fellers on th' steamer. I can sign his name to a dot, an' nobody'll know but he done it sure enough; an' so I'll gobble up th' whole pot wi' only a lot o' duces in me hand—an' so ye done it. Now w'at have ye got to say? out wi' 't an' tell th' whole truth, or I'll have ye behind iron bars afore mornin', an' Michael Snoozer never goes back on his word."

"It is true—all true," moaned the wretched old man, cowering down in his chair and rocking his body to and fro. "It is true, Snoozer, all you have said is true."

"Well, now man, now ye're talkin' sense. Look up now an' be a man, ye're all right, I tell ye. Snoozer's not th' man t' jump on a feller w'en he's down, an' he never gouges or bites. Snoozer's a square shoulder hitter, a reg'lar stand-up-an'-knock-downer, w'at'll give a helpin' hand t' a pal in distress. Now look-a-here; I'll let ye off mighty easy, I want one o' them

papers only. T'others ye can keep an' makes pipe-lighters out o' 'em if ye likes. There was a will 'mong them papers and I wants it. The will o' Mark Barry in favor o' Mrs. Worsham and her daughter. It locks th' property 'gainst a feller w'at'll give big money to' have it destroyed, an' I must have it—that's w'at I come for. Give me that will, Skinner, an' I'll let ye off an' I'll keep mum 'bout w'at I knows."

During the first part of Snoozer's remarks, Skinner's face underwent a marvelous change; the dead, ashey-white color became, as usual, light saffron, and the deep wrinkles found their proper places and laid still. His eyes assumed their usual crafty, cunning expression, and his thin, shriveled lips found repose. In a twinkling he became thoroughly himself again, and he arose to his feet and stood firm and upright, looking steadily into Snoozer's face. But as that individual proceeded, and spoke of the will, a troubled expression came on Skinner's face, and he sat down in his chair and began to poke the fire. He was silent a few moments, bending over the stove, and when he straightened up, his face bore no traces of apprehension. He even smiled, grimly, it is true, but nevertheless smiled, until the wrinkles again rippled over the surface of his face, became tangled together, and utterly confused.

"Listen, Snoozer," he said, earnestly, "listen, for I shall be strictly truthful. I have no desire now to deceive you in the least, and besides, I fully realize that I am in your power and that it would be madness to further oppose you. I swear that I did not find any will in the sack, have never seen it and know nothing of it. I think I know who the party is that wants the will destroyed, and if so, I am willing to make

such arrangements as will be perfectly satisfactory to him."

Observing that Snoozer was about to speak, Skinner added, quickly, "wait until I am through, please. I have had my deeds recorded, and that can not be undone; but if I succeed in firmly establishing my title, I will pay Charles Barry the value of one-half the property, and I will give you five thousand dollars. Come now," he added, exultingly, "is not that fair and generous enough? what do you say, is it a bargain?" He was in high glee, for a mountain's weight of apprehension had been lifted from his mind, and his spirits arose accordingly. "What do you say, my dear Mr. Snoozer?" he repeated, playfully punching that individual in the side with his thumb, while he chuckled, simpered and almost danced.

"That's a whack," responded Snoozer, excitedly, grasping Skinner's hand and squeezing it until the bones fairly cracked in his vice-like grip, causing him to writhe in agony, and bringing a faint flush to his saffron-colored face, "that's a whack, signed, sealed and delivered, rale quail on toast, an' I'll answer in Barry's name an' my own now." Then to Skinner's infinite relief he released his hand, rubbed his retreating forehead a moment, and added, "But, Skinner, I'm orful hard up just now, an' if ye could help a feller t' a few hundred, it would be a rale accommodation."

"Well, how *little* can you get along with," inquired Skinner, dubiously. "Don't be hard on me now, for I'm terribly pushed—run to death almost every day to make ends meet."

"Hump," replied Snoozer, reflectively, "hump!

Well, Skinner, say five hundred; I can get along with that for the present, and that's moderate enough, I'm sure, give me your check for five hundred, an' I'll not bother ye 'till ye win th' stake."

Skinner stood a moment, wringing his hands, while an agonizing expression swept over his face, and then, without another word, he went to his iron-bound chest, took out his check-book, wrote a check for five hundred dollars, and, with a regretful sigh, handed it to Snoozer.

That individual's face wore an expression of intense satisfaction as he received the bank order, and he was profuse in his manifestations of pleasure. "This is all right, Skinner," he said, as he passed through the doorway into the pitchy darkness of the great hall. "This is all right, and you can swear that Snoozer will stick by ye as long as there's hair on his head or a drop o' blood in me body. Me name is Snoozer, Skinner—Snoozer, *Michael Snoozer*, an' I never goes back on me word. Good night, ole pard, an' say—don't lose any sleep t' night, fur 't won't do no good. Ye mount as well take it kinder easy likes, jes' as tho' ye 'spected it all th' while, fur as I said in th' song I made up:

"It am better t' grin than be cussin',

It am better t' sing than t' cry,

It am better not t' be fussin'

Wi' luck as he passes ye by—

Ge'in' only the bad,

Le'in' only th' sad.

"Take no load on y'r heart

Ye can't kick from y'r heels;

Tho' fortin' depart

W'en Cloven-foot deals—

Jest twinkle y'r eye

An' throttle th' sigh.

“Jest wait fur the deal—
It'll pay, pards.
For ye see, don't ye see?
Stock th' cards!”

“Ha-ha-ha! Skinner, that's th' kind o' game-cock I am,” and with a horrible grin and sundry bows and bodily contortions, he closed the door with a slam-bang, which made the loose board partition spring and rattle. Then he grasped the stair railing with his hands, felt his way cautiously down to the pavement and walked away toward the Sands.

Skinner had followed Snoozer to the door, and stood listening to the retreating footsteps of the proud lord of the Dew Drop Inn. His hands were clenched until the long, sharp nails were buried deep into his palms. and the expression of his face was at once ghastly and terrible. He crouched like a panther prepared to spring, even snarled and snapped like a famished wolf dashing on its prey. In husky whispers he raved and blasphemed, cursed heaven and earth, matter and space, time and eternity, and finally, overwhelmed by anger and exhaustion sank down in his chair, and a flood of scalding tears burst from his eyes and ran down his haggard, ashen face.

There, alone, in the dim light of the tallow dip, in the intense cold of that miserable attic, in squalid misery, he groveled, blasphemed, moaned and wept, until the gray light of early dawn came in at his narrow window, and then, utterly broken down, he tremblingly crept away under the tattered blankets on his bed, and sank into deep slumber.

There had been other sleepless eyes in that miserable attic that night, and there had been an attentive observer

and listener. Little Jim had trembled as he listened, comprehending every word, weighing probabilities and predicting results. He was shocked and horrified by the shameful revelation, and when Snoozer had gone, and Skinner sat in his chair, swaying to and fro, weeping and moaning through the long, dismal hours of the night, he watched the tallow dip burn down into the throat of the bottle, flicker and go out, leaving the room in pitchy darkness. As he listened to the plaintive moaning of winds around the gables of the attic, the rattle of loose boards and shutters, and Skinner's mournful sobs, the room seemed filled with horrible, shadowy forms, gibbering, threatening and mocking the wicked old man. And so the hours glided slowly by, and the night wore away, and not until Skinner had retired and began to breathe heavily in slumber, did the sweet spirit of rest, lovingly and gently close the boy's weary eyes and waft him away from the fears and sorrows of life to the arms of his angel mother.

CHAPTER XVI.

SNOOZER PLAYS COMEDY ALONE.

Michael Snoozer was happy. He had managed Skinner admirably, wrung from him, as he termed it, "a right smart chance o' th' needful," and had succeeded otherwise, beyond his most sanguine expectations. He had gotten Skinner in his power, had worked upon the terrors of his guilty conscience, pressed him back inch by inch even to the brink of despair, and then, suddenly, and without yielding a fraction of his advantage, had awakened within him new courage and fresh hope. He had thereby bound Skinner to him body and soul, and held him prisoner, shackled by his own evil deeds. He had visited Skinner, expecting only to secure Mark Barry's will; had deemed its possession of great importance to himself, and yet he had gone away without it and glad that it had not fallen into Skinner's hands. He deemed it a fortunate circumstance that Skinner knew nothing of the will, inasmuch as Barry would, under Skinner's agreement, receive one-half the value of his uncle's estate, and that, too, without the hazard of additional crime. As for himself, and that always most interested him, he had already received from Skinner five hundred dollars, and the promise of five thousand. Had he not made a master stroke? He thought so, and was quite satisfied. He had communicated the facts to Barry; had requested him to call at the Dew Drop Inn, at 9 o'clock the following evening, and the hands

of the clock pointed to half-past eight. Yes, Snoozer was happy, as he sat alone in his council chamber, sipping punch and smoking a fragrant cigar, and in fancy he saw a glittering dome and a lofty tower added to the Dew Drop Inn. His hands grasped the arms of his easy chair, his feet rested on the mantel above his head, his eyes were half closed and dreamy, and yet their constantly changing expression denoted that his mind was not in repose. Occasionally his eyelids drooped slowly until the stiff, bristling lashes locked together, and he appeared to be gliding away into slumber, and then the corners of his eyes would suddenly begin to twitch, the wrinkles on his retreating forehead to ripple, the corners of his mouth to creep back toward his ears, his huge negro lips to part gradually, disclosing two rows of enormous slanting, shovel-shaped teeth, and finally a broad grin, fiendish and ghastly, rested on his face. He whispered his thoughts continually, the sound of his own voice seeming to quicken his understanding of his own meditations, for really there was so little intellectuality in his composition, and such an overwhelming preponderance of animal tendencies, that he was susceptible only to external influences. Therefore, the sound of his own voice repeating his thoughts impressed them on his memory, and enabled him to go from point to point, and actually reason from cause to effect. "Barry," he muttered, "is now as helpless as a baby; he can't hurt nobody, nor do nobody no good. Th' poor devil's in a snarl w'at nobody but me can git him out of, an' th' question am, will't pay me t' tangle him worse 'til—well, I've got him by th' throat anyhow, an' I don't know but I'd better shut down on him

an' cut off his supply o' air entirely. May be 't mount pay t' let him drag along awhile yit, but he's my meat in the end, anyhow. Skinner belongs t' me, too, an' I'll hold his nose t' th' stone till th' fire flies from it, you bet. I'll bleed him till his money-box gits as lean and light as a collapsed balloon, an' then I'll let him go t' lie down an' die o' disappointment an' sorrer. That's th' ticket w'at'll win th' boss prize, th' full w'at'll sweep th' board," he said, springing to his feet, while he raised his clenched hand above his head, and brought it down violently by his side. Then he struck a mock tragic attitude, and exclaimed, "Madam, come! This gentle an' an', unforced record o' Hamlet sits smilin' on me 'art." Then he bowed low, wheedling and chuckling, retired a few steps, his body still bent in salutation, and exclaimed, "Honorable Mr. Skinner, y'r honor, sir! Could ye help a feller wi' th' use o' y'r name t' a bank loan, sir? 'Yes, proud o' th' honor a-doin' it,' did you say, sir? Much obliged, sir, ye're under many obligations to me, sir, thank me.

"An' ye, sir (here he bowed low toward the bed-post), an' ye, th' Right Reverin', Honorable Bishop Charles Barry, Esquire, me most humble-come-tumble, sir, receive, sir, th' 'surance, sir, o' me most extinguished consideration, sir, an' believe me, sir, y'r most warmest friend and retainer, Michael Snoozer, pastor in charge o' th' church o' wice, an' king o' th' Dew Drop Inn." He scraped his right foot back on the floor, sided several paces to the right, bowed, skipped several paces backward and to the left, bowed again toward the bed-post, contorting his face horribly. Then he straightened up, broke forth in a hoarse, fiendish laugh, advanced to the mantel, lighted a fresh cigar,

folded his hands behind him, turned his back to the fire, leaned his head to one side, half closed his eyes, and, with features in repose, stood still and silent, puffing the fragrant clouds above his head.

The little French clock on the mantel told the passing moments in clear and regular beats, and as Snoozer listened, with half-closed eyes, its sharp, distinct ticking sounded as a human voice saying, "Good luck! good luck! good luck!" "Thank ye," he said, "thank ye, me true little servant, ye're a trump, sure enough, an' never goes back on a feller. Ye've marked th' time for Snoozer these many a year w'at's gone, an' never made a slip; ye've sung him t' sleep every day an' night since he brought ye home; ye've buzzed him 'bout this thing an' that, given him lots o' good advice, an' put many a sharp idea in his head. An' now, w'en Snoozer has got th' world under him an' grasped th' lightnin', ye jest goes wild wi' joy, an' sings out right lively y'r 'gratulations. Yes, ye've touched th' right string o' th' fiddle, little feller, an' ye've got th' right tune now, for Snoozer is in luck, ye bet. Yes, good luck! good luck! good luck! little daisy, good luck, an' no mistake." At that moment the little clock, as though replying, began to tell the hour, and its silvery-toned bell at each stroke seemed to say, "here!" while its ticking continued to proclaim "good luck." Snoozer's quick ears caught, defined and connected the sounds, and as he looked up at the face of the clock, laughed and said, "Right, little sweetheart, ye've hit it again, 'Nine o'clock. Good luck here!' K-e-rect! That's th' hour t' a dot, an' if I don't strike 'good luck here' with Barry, it'll be contrary t' me calculations, for I've got th' miserable dev—"

At that moment a light rap on the door startled him and broke the thread of his discourse to the clock, and, facing the door, he commanded, in his usual pompous tone, "Come in."

Somebody opened the door, came in and, without further invitation, sat down before the fire, saying in a hollow, husky voice, "Well, I'm here."

That voice was not wholly unfamiliar to Snoozer, yet it was evidently changed from its natural tone. The form sitting bolt upright in the chair was also familiar, outline, clothing and all, but its head was encircled by a broad, white bandage down to its eyes, and the face was swollen and disfigured beyond recognition.

"I'm here, Snoozer," he repeated; "I'm here what there is left of me, but not without painful effort. I received your message, and (glancing up at the clock) I see I'm promptly on time."

"Why, blast me eyes, if it aren't—Why, blazes! W'at hev ye bin doin' wi' y'rself?" sputtered Snoozer. "Why, Barry, durned if I knowed ye. W'at's bin th' matter? Somebody rubbed ye down an' chawed ye up?"

"Slightly," was the brief and sullen reply.

"Tell me all about it, pard, durned if I likes t' see ye in that fix. Did ye get inter a row?"

"Yes."

"An' got licked?"

"Yes."

"An' did ye punch th' other feller much?"

"Yes, I whipped him like a dog; whipped him in the street before a jeering crowd; followed him half a square, dealing him blows on the head and face, cutting

the flesh until blood ran at every stroke. Curse him, I wish I had blown his brains out, and so I would have done had there been a cap on my pistol."

"That would have bin a bad job," replied Snoozer, "guess it's better as it is. There's no pay in such biz; but who did you fout with, Barry? Give me th' 'ticulars."

Charles Barry arose from his chair, made several quick turns across the room, muttering curses and gesturing violently. Finally he approached Snoozer, rolled the bandage up from his eyes, and said, "Snoozer, the whole plot is discovered. How, or by whom originally I don't know. Still, the fact remains that certain persons are fully informed of all our acts, even the means employed to get rid of Mark Barry, even of our plan in reference to Mrs. Worsham, and my designs in that connection. That towering air castle has vanished utterly, leaving us firmly in the clutches of the law. At least we are in imminent danger, for I believe the facts are now known to the authorities, and I warn you, Snoozer, that all the influence at your command, all your power and skill may fail, utterly fail, to shield us from the consequences."

The expression of Michael Snoozer's face underwent rapid changes as Charles Barry proceeded, changed from quiet unconcern to deep interest and finally, alarm. His olive complexion first became light purple, then straw color and finally pale ash. Reaching around the chimney jam he pulled the bell-cord, waited a moment, and then rang again violently, and stood in a listening attitude. Immediately there were quick footsteps along the hall, some one approaching in frantic haste, and a moment later the door was dashed

open and a negro boy rushed into the room with such speed and force as to overturn a chair and fall headlong on the floor.

"Get up! ye black rascal," growled Snoozer, savagely. "Get up I say, or I'll help ye wi' th' toe o' me boot. W'at did ye come boltin' in here in that way fur? Ye'd better put on brakes next time, or I'll warm th' wax in y'r ears, ye black ape; now light out o' this right lively, an' fetch a bottle o' brandy, some sugar, water, ice an' lemons. Out wi' ye now, like a streak o' lightnin', blast y'r stoopid eyes."

As the servant hurried away to obey the order, Snoozer turned to Barry and said, "We'll take some-thin' t' kinder settle our nerves, an' take th' wrinkles out o' our thinkin' caps, an' then we'll 'liberate o' th' matter. Truth is I think ye're a trifle upsot wi' y'r fight, kinder looney like, perhaps ye've had a touch o' th' jim-jams, an' ye kinder sees things double like. Howsomever, I can make up me mind 'bout that w'en I've hear'n y'r yarn, beginnin' at th' fust an' goin' straight through, no floppin' sidewise, but toe t' th' scratch an' iollerin a line plumb through t' th' end. I hear that black ape comin' now," he added in a lower voice, assuming a listening attitude, "yes, here he am." At these words the door opened, and the negro boy entered, bearing a tray on which were the articles Snoozer had ordered. Depositing all on the center-table, he stood bowing respectfully and awaiting further orders, but Snoozer merely pointed at the door, saying, "get out o' this, right lively," and he obeyed instantly.

Snoozer went to the center-table, poured in each glass a little water, some pounded ice, two heaping

spoonfuls of white sugar, and some lemon juice, and finally filled the glasses with pure brandy.

"There," said Snoozer, handing one of the glasses to Barry, "there's a genuine brandy smasher. Sniff that down, an' if ye've had it up y'r nose t' strong lately it'll kinder straighten ye out, I reckon, an' ye won't see things double any more." Then, taking the other glass from the table, he touched it against Barry's, held it up in the light, looked through the amber colored liquid and said :

"Here's t' our friends, have we got any?

Here's t' our luck, is it dead?

Here's t' th' law, a mere catch-penny!

Here's t' our hopes, have they fled?

"Cusses on them that go back on us,

Cusses on them that won't stay,

Cusses on them that go quack on us,

Cusses on them that betray.

"Grind knife,

Load gun,

Take life,

Well done!

"That's me own makin' up, Barry, jes' as I went along, aren't that scram? and don't it fit the place? Them's me sentiments, anyhow, an' th' words jingle O. K., if th' poetry aren't quite up t' th' scratch."

"Good! good!" was Barry's enthusiastic reply. "You are quite a poet, Snoozer, and you have certainly mistaken your calling. But listen :

"If you'd quit your dicker

In souls and in liquor,

And faucet your mighty brain,

Your name you could write

On the towering height

Of the lofty temple of fame.

“ But you’ll never do that,
For water and fat
Won’t mix without pearlash
Dropped into the vat.

“ What a pity such skill
Of reason and quill
Should be lost to the world,
Like a murmuring rill,
Flowing into a swamp
Of reeds dark and still!

‘ O, Snoozer, my friend,
Close the Dew Drop Inn,
Be great—e’en immortal,
And pack down the tin.”

“ Hurrah! Hurrah!” shouted Snoozer, vehemently, “ hurray! Durned if that aren’t good. Blast me eyes, but ye’ve taken th’ wind all out o’ me sails, an’ left me floppin’ aroun’ in a dead calm. Well, pard, here’s a new head o’ hair for ye, an’ confusion t’ y’r ole woman.” Then two glasses clicked together, and two glasses full of the extract of crime, flavored with woe and want, hissed down two human throats.

“ How’s that, Barry?” inquired Snoozer, smacking his lips and blinking his eyes, “ aren’t that th’ pure quill?”

“ Good! very good, Snoozer,” replied Barry, although he made a wry face and shuddered perceptibly. It is good, Snoozer—a pure article beyond a doubt.”

“ Have a cigar, pard?” inquired Snoozer, passing the box to Barry. “ Them’s th’ genuine, reported first best.”

Then the two men sat down by the fire, and as Snoozer settled himself comfortably in his chair, he said, “ Well Barry, I guess y’r nerves are settled enough, an’ now gives us the ’ticulars o’ th’ bust-up o’ our plans.

Then we'll talk it over an' look it o'er and see how th' land lays."

"In futherance of our designs," said Barry, "I called on Grace Worsham last week, the night of the big snow storm, let me see, Friday I believe, yes—well, I called and was very kindly received. Her mother was in bed, which I considered quite fortunate, and gradually laid siege to the fortress of her charming daughter, but she shrank away from me in terror and was about to leave the room, when the door bell rang and she went to answer it. When the hall door opened, I recognized the voice of that peddling sneak, Leo Cassell. As I preferred not to meet him then and there, I slipped into an adjoining room just as he entered, but much to my surprise I found myself in the presence of a woman, dressed in worn and faded black, a disguise, I soon discovered, for she proved to be a person of high social position with whom I was at one time quite intimate. I also discovered that she had listened to all I had said to Grace Worsham, and, as a matter of course did not feel very pleasant toward me. We had a scene, quite dramatic, a war of words, and then I had the pleasure of hearing a spirited conversation between Grace Worsham and that sneak Cassell. He detailed our scheme to her in full. Well, when he had spoken his piece and made his peace, to which she contributed by many flattering attentions, sly, timid caresses, and finally an affectionate adieu, I followed him down town, stopped at a harness shop and bought a whip, overtook him on a street corner, and flogged him until from utter exhaustion I was compelled to stop. As I did so, he took me at a disadvantage, snatched the whip from my hands and knocked me down. I was insensible

several hours, and when consciousness returned, found myself in my own room. Now, Snoozer, I have given you the facts, and what shall we do?"

Snoozer had been an attentive listener, and was, doubtless, much agitated in mind, but possessed such wonderful control of his nerves that he did not betray the least emotion. As Barry concluded, Snoozer arose from his chair, leisurely went to the table, filled the two glasses again with brandy, handed one to Barry, took up the other, nodded significantly, and then the soul-destroying potion hissed down their throats.

"Now," said Snoozer, setting down his glass and smacking his lips, "now, Barry, that'll brighten our wits an' give us grit, so we can talk biz t' th' pint an' fight right up t' th' scratch, e'en t' death, an' never show a white feather. Here, throw that stump away an' have a fresh cigar," handing Barry the box. "So! Now what gets me," he continued, sitting down in his easy chair, "is how that feller Cassell found out about it. If I only knowed that, I could tell jest w'at t' do, but, as it is, I'm sorter stumped." He did not speak his thoughts, for, while his lips pronounced words, he was thinking thus. "That's good enough for Snoozer, an' I'll gobble th' whole pot. That gits away with Barry an' leaves me boss o' the job—stockholder, receiver, treasurer, an' w'at not? I'll take Skinner's bribe in Barry's name, an' then buy Barry off for a thousand or so. He's skeared now most out o' his wits, an' I can help him along in that line a trifle, an' he'll run away t' th' mountains or some furrin part an' keep away, I'll warrant.

"We're in a bad fix, Barry," he continued aloud, "an' I tell yer fur a fact, that Snoozer is up a stump fur

onc't. I'm afeared we're done fur, and th' result 'll be we'll have t' break rock fur the people th' balance o' our natural lives, that is, if we stay here t' be gobbled. So it seems t' me that th' only sensible thing fur you t' do will be t' git right out o' this in double-quick time."

"I have been thinking of that," replied Barry, and I am fortunate to be able to do so at any time, for I'm ahead of game about twenty-five hundred. But what do *you* propose to do? You are implicated also."

"Never do you mind about Snoozer; he will take care of himself, ye bet. Howsomever, t' tell th' truth, I shall have t' smell around some fust, t' find just w'at's w'at afore I can make any plans. To begin with, I want t' find out how that feller Cassell got his information. That's th' important pint, an' w'en I find out 'bout 't, I can then make up me mind whether it'll pay best t' face th' music or run. Anyhow, I shall just lay low fur awhile, an' set me smellin' committee t' work. If there's any pay dirt in it, they'll find it, ye bet. I'm in no great danger anyhow, fur if't comes t' th' pinch I can bring witnesses t' prove anything I want, an', besides that, I can tell ye, pard, it won't *pay* them lawyers an' judges t' be very 'ticular 'bout huntin' up evidence 'gainst Snoozer, fur ye see, pard, I own th' whole batch on 'em, an' they're mine t' keep, ye bet, still I don't want t' be beholdin' t' 'em if I can help it, and I'll try t' work through meself, but if worse comes to worse I'll play th' high trumps. But ye see, pard, *ye* have got nothin' t' fall back on. I can't help ye any if I get into trouble, for I'll have t' look out fur Snoozer, 'specially. Y'r reputation aren't any too good o' late, 'cause ye're known t' be slick-fingered wi' th' keards,

an' ye're 'spected considerable o' shovin' th' queer. Lookin' th' matter all o'er, I 'spect ye'd better light out fur some other port, where ye'll be safe. I'll cover up y'r tracks an' manage y'r biz fur ye here, if ye wants me t'. It won't pay fur ye t' stay here an' try t' cheek it through wi' me, fur if w'at y'r tellin' is true, ye're just as sure t' be gobbled up afore this day week, just as sure as ye lives t' that time, providin' ye don't light out o' this. Snoozer knows a thing or two, an' gives ye fair warnin' now in time. Howsomever, ye're y'r own man at present, an' if ye don't think as I do 'bout it, why just click along an' see how ye'll come out on 't."

While Snoozer talked, Barry arose from his chair and began to walk the floor excitedly. His guilty conscience spurred him unmercifully, and yet his strong will struggled desperately against his fears. He realized that his wicked intrigue had utterly failed, that its most direful consequences threatened him, and that death or imprisonment were his sure rewards in the near future if he failed to place himself beyond the grasp of the law. He knew Cassell to be a brave and determined foe, a tireless, sleepless, vigilant avenger, and Snoozer's blunt arguments convinced him that arrest, conviction and punishment could not long be delayed if he did not at once seek safety in flight. As Snoozer paused to relight his cigar, which had gone out while he talked, Barry paused before him and said, "I am satisfied as to the wisdom of your advice, Snoozer, and I shall not hesitate to accept and act on it at once. I will leave the city to-night for Colorado or New Mexico. I shall go from here directly to my lodgings, pack my baggage and send it to the depot yet to-night. Even now I fear I have delayed

too long, and may run into a trap the first move I make, for if Cassell has been as industrious in pursuit of me as his retaliation for the flogging I gave him was sudden and irresistible, the hounds of the law are even now on my track. However, I shall be compelled to hazard results, and make a bold dash for liberty—aye, for life.” As he spoke the last words, he walked the floor excitedly a moment, then paused before the center-table, and, with quivering hands, poured a glassful of brandy from the bottle, swallowed it at a single draught, and then, approaching Snoozer, who stood leaning on the mantel with back to the fire, he said :

“Can I depend upon you — can I trust you, Snoozer ? ”

“Well, I should gulp to gurgle. Ye bet y’r life ye can, Barry,” was the almost eager reply, and yet somehow Snoozer became wonderfully and suddenly interested in the blaze of the fire as it curled and flashed up the chimney, for instead of meeting Barry’s earnest, questioning gaze, he glanced around over his shoulder and watched the flame and smoke.

“Ye bet y’r life ye can,” he repeated, after a brief pause, and turning, looked young Barry full in the face, but the cunning twinkle which had danced in his eyes while he looked in the fire had given place to one of deep earnestness and solicitude, and Barry felt satisfied of his sincerity.

“But why d’ye ask ? ” inquired Snoozer, innocently. “Any wire-pullin’ ye want done while ye’re gone ? If so, I’m the feller w’at can do it up scram, ye bet ! ”

“I know you can, Snoozer,” replied Barry, but I am through with such business, for the present, at least. I

want simply to know if I can depend on you not to betray my whereabouts, no matter what happens."

"Ye bet ye can; just bet y'r bottom dollar on 't, an' ye'll win th' wager."

"I know it, Snoozer, and thank you," replied Barry, grasping his hand, "and now will you attend to a little business for me?"

"Certain, ye can git me t' do it, w'at is it?"

"I want you to collect a few honor dues for me, five hundred dollars or so, for which I will give you written orders, if you will furnish writing material," and he sat down at the table, while Snoozer brought pen ink and writing-paper, and placed them before him.

"Let me see," said Barry, reflectively, as he dipped the pen in the ink; "I'll write you three orders, one on—"

"W'at's th' use o' that?" interrupted Snoozer; "just put it down that I'm y'r regular biz man while ye're gone, to collect money for ye, pay y'r debts (if ye owes any, an' wants 'em paid). Just make a kind o' general bill o' 'thority, so nobody'll 'spect that there's a screw loose somewhere, an' that ye've skipped off on y'r ear for fear o' the law."

"True, I didn't think of that," replied Barry, and he began to write:

"TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

"This certifies that I have this day appointed Michael Snoozer my agent and attorney, and I hereby delegate to him authority to sign my name in receipt and to contracts and obligations as he may deem to my interest.

CHARLES BARRY."

Then he read it to Snoozer, who listened attentively, while his eyes reflected his intense satisfaction, but he remarked, carelessly, "I guess that'll do well enough, for I don't s'pose I'll have much biz t' see to, eh?"

"No," replied Barry, "collect two hundred and forty from little Bradshaw, a hundred and ten from Foxey Grube, and three hundred from Lafe Burgiss. That is all, I believe." He had written down the names and amounts on a slip of paper, folded both and handed them to Snoozer, saying: "Here they are, and now I must be off. Then he arose, poured out another full glass of brandy, drank it, put on his great-coat and hat with nervous haste, grasped Snoozer's hand and said merely, as he hurried out, "Good-bye, I'll write you soon."

As Charles Barry dashed along toward the city, behind a pair of spirited horses, he seemed to be in feverish haste, frequently calling out to the driver impatiently, "*faster! faster!*" But when he alighted before his lodging-house, he was perfectly calm and self-possessed, having arrived at a new determination, and as he sat before the cheerful fire in his room enjoying a fragrant cigar, he muttered, "It is all well enough anyhow, Snoozer can hold the sack and is perfectly welcome to all the game he catches. There are other men in the world quite as cunning, I would never have suspected, had he not overdone matters by requesting the power of attorney, Snoozer and Skinner will both bear watching, and I'll constitute myself a committee of one for that duty. My place of concealment will be as thoroughly secure as though it were under the cypress boughs of the Dismal Swamp, or in the wilderness of the Rocky Mountains."

Meanwhile, Snoozer remained sitting by the fire in his council chamber at the Dew Drop Inn, grinning, chuckling, scheming, and so remained until the little French clock proclaimed midnight. Then with yawns

and stretchings, he arose, undressed, put out the light, and soon, under the warm rose blankets of his comfortable bed, he forgot intrigue and glided into deep slumber. He was in his element—the only condition in which he was not absolutely dangerous.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOXHEY GRUBE RECEIVES A VALENTINE.

It was Valentine day, and Foxey Grube was out on his regular morning promenade. He was dressed in the very extreme of the flashy style peculiar to his class, and with scrupulous care and neatness. His imperial and mustache were waxed and twisted *a la Napoleon*—his blonde hair clustered in tiny ringlets under the brim of his jockey little hat, his cheeks had been freshly and skillfully pinked and his lips bright carmined. His eyebrows had not been slighted, having been freshly penciled, and over all his face and hair had been sprinkled some delightful perfume. His necktie! ah me, what a wonderful production of art—delicate sky blue, with white vines and flowers interwoven and in clusters, raised as though embroidered, and with a border an inch wide, of very delicate salmon color. It was a veritable counterpane in size and shape, and was folded neatly, tied in a square knot, and adorned by a magnificent diamond pin, very valuable. On the little finger of his white, delicate left hand was a fine diamond cluster ring, and around his neck hung a very long and heavy lady's gold chain fastened to a stem-winding Swiss watch, on the upper case of which was engraved and studded thickly with tiny diamonds the name of its owner, "Edward Grube." His great coat, of the finest English Melton, of delicate mouse color, fur-lined and trimmed, was entirely innocent of dust or stain, and his bright purple silk plush vest, and dove-

colored doe-skin pants fitted his form as neatly as bark on a tree. In his left hand he carried a pair of otter-skin gloves and in his right a very slender, tapering, ebony, gold-headed cane. He seemed in exceedingly good humor, and as he skipped lightly along Wabash avenue, through the throngs of uppertendom's most prominent and august representatives, out ostensibly as a matter of duty to one's self, and with a single motive to-wit: to take vigorous exercise in the pure bracing atmosphere of winter, but really to be seen by others and to see and feel jealous of other's clothing, general appearance, etc.; as he pressed his way through the throng, he performed the Boston Dip and Kangaroo Droop with more than ordinary skill.

As he turned a certain street corner, he met a tidy, gentlemanly lad, who, as he approached, bowed politely, raised his hat and held out a dainty, perfumed billet-doux, and, as Grube took it from his hand, hurried on and disappeared around the street corner.

With trembling hand Grube broke the seal and drew forth two tiny sheets of paper, rose-colored and perfumed, on which were written beautifully, in a lady's hand several verses of poetry addressed,

"TO EDWARD GRUBE
FROM
HIS VALENTINE."

He stood still in the freezing atmosphere to read, and, as he leaned against a lamp post, shivered with cold and excitement, but went straight through to the last word, and as he returned the valentine to its envelope and put it carefully into his inside coat pocket, just over his heart, he exclaimed, joyfully, "It is from her, I am quite sure. If she is in her boudoir she can

see me now. I hope she *is* there," and he kissed his hand toward the window, as he moved slowly on, but the curtains were closely drawn, and he could not see two lovely eyes peeping at him through an opening in the blind of another room, else his heart would have collapsed totally.

Somehow, and he did not pause to debate the pros or cons, the whys or wherefores, he had twice made the circuit of a certain aristocratic square, which each time brought him before the Palace of the Avenue, and somehow, and he did not pause in the freezing atmosphere to endeavor to unravel that mystery either, his gaze rested continually, and with more than ordinary earnestness, on a certain window of French plate glass in the second story front of that beautiful building. Twice had he tripped lightly by, doing his neatest and prettiest nipping, but alas, only the bright sunlight shimmered on the polished surface of the glass, revealing only the heavy gilded frame of an oil painting on the wall just at the focal point of light. In vain he looked for a certain beautiful face, just behind the glass, or a certain queenly form moving gracefully within. Kate Dudley's boudoir was evidently unoccupied at that moment, or at least she was not visible, His heartrending sighs were wafted away on the cold, emotionless air, and frost nipped his nose and pinched his tender toes, yet he was insensible to the pain, and with wonderful perseverance, and heroism unparalleled, he made another circuit of the square, nipping and sighing as he gazed at the enchanting window.

Ah! his heart gave a great throb and began to pulsate violently, while warm blood surged through his veins, mantling his cheeks with a bright crimson flush,

which put to shame the counterfeit there, and a gauzy film obscured his vision. Yet he could see the window, and close behind the glass a form and face to which his excited imagination gave familiar outline and substance. He stood spell-bound, riveted to the pavement by the quick hammer of passion, and gazed in rapture, bowed, smirked, and flirtingly drew forth his perfumed white silk handkerchief and waved it slyly. The figure had paused before the window—it was a female form, tall and stately—she was watching him—ah! heaven sustain him, she had kissed her hand, grasped the sash—raised it—and—merciful heavens! Had his Cleopatra suddenly turned black? In a twinkling had her long silken hair become kinked, matted and her features disfigured and swollen? She waved something white—a pillow case, a towel, or possibly an article of wearing apparel. She called out something which he could not clearly understand, but the voice grated harshly in his ears, and he hurried away at an astonishing speed, laughing heartily at his own discomfiture and disappointment, and muttering as he rushed along, “The impudent nigger, a greasy pot-wrestler or laundress. Oh Lord, I’ll never survive it! Ha! ha! ha! sold! sold and delivered!”

Notwithstanding his disappointment and chagrin, he was in excellent humor, and was laughing quietly as he ascended the front steps of his lodging-house and inserted his latch-key in the lock. He was about to enter when he heard a light footstep on the pavement, and turning, beheld the trembling form and sad face of little Jim. The child had been weeping, and his eyes were red and swollen. He had been running, and was so exhausted that he could scarcely walk. His emaci-

ated face seemed, if possible, more shrunken and pinched than usual, while his large blue eyes had retired deeper into their sockets, and dark brown rings encircled them. His cheeks had fallen deeper in on his jaws, leaving his cheek bones sharply prominent, and his thin, bloodless lips tightly drawn. His face was white, of that peculiar hue which is ever the forerunner of death, and his tiny shriveled hands seemed cold and stiff.

Grube took all in at a glance, and for a moment stood still and mute, looking pityingly down on his little friend. The child had advanced to the first step, rubbing his cold little hands together, and looking up questioningly, beseechingly at Grube's kind face. At that moment his thin lips moved spasmodically, in vain endeavors to speak, but his voice was gone, and only a wail—a faint whisper, just distinguishable, came, "Papa, dear Papa."

As these three words sounded in his ears like a sweet, faint whisper of a spirit, Foxey Grube, the vain fop, flirt and gambler, instantly forgot his criminal weakness and depravity, his vices and evil tendencies, and became his true and better self. Visions of a beautiful woman, who had once called him darling, but who had passed away to a higher and purer life ere her soul had been stained and blighted by intentional sin, floated before his eyes, and a flood of tender emotions swept his heart. Tears blinded his eyes so he could barely see the sad face and little trembling form on the pavement, which stood holding its thin little hands up to him, beseechingly, whispering, "Papa! dear Papa!"

A moment only, Grube stood thus looking down, grasping the door-knob, and then in a flash he stood by his side, stooped down, lifted him in his arms,

pressed a kiss on his cold face and sobbed, "My child, my dear, dear child!"

Yes, Foxey Grube, the gambler, fop and rogue, the dainty, exquisite Foxey Grube, the man of the world, and champion of the gaming table, the schemer and fashionable leech, sucking financial blood copiously from young and silly millionaires, hanging around the charming portals of the *upper circle* (?) on the upper crust of uppertendom, and seducing the unwary and passion-wild into his strong nets. Yes, that identical Foxey Grube was actually there on the street in the broad light of day, holding in his arms a poor, forsaken child, weeping over him and pressing warm kisses on his cold face.

Who can doubt that there are latent springs of purity and goodness in every soul which may accomplish a thorough regeneration of the moral being if opened by the magic touch of pure affection? In the light of every-day experience can we not believe, truly, that there is no human soul utterly depraved—utterly lost beyond all hope of regeneration through pure influences? Can we not believe, *do we not know*, that there are within all human hearts a well-spring of purity, a fountain and reservoir of truth and goodness? They may be clogged and obstructed by evil passions and influences. They may be drained and dried up by the fires of lust, intemperance and selfishness, but the fountain head is in the heart of the Great Eternal, and the Master has said that with Him "all things are possible."

A few moments Foxey Grube stood thus with the boy, leaning over him, sobbing and kissing his cold, white face, and then, with a quick, firm tread, he

ascended the steps and entered the house, bearing the child in his arms; up the stairs and along the dark hall, with quick, elastic tread, to the door of his room, which he unlocked with nervous haste, and put Jimmie tenderly down in his easy chair before the fire.

"There, my darling, you'll soon be warm," said Grube, poking the fire until the bright blaze roared and flashed up the chimney, throwing a pleasant glow of heat out into the room. "Poor little boy, where have you been?"

"I have been, since daylight, out around the alleys hunting for rags and paper, and, Papa, I—I couldn't find much, and—and Uncle was very angry about it, and—and when I went home from the junk dealer's with only seven cents, he—he—" here the child's voice failed, he sobbed and finally began to weep.

Grube knelt down by the child and caressed him, spoke kindly, very, very kindly. There was pathos, there was music in his voice, sweet music from the vibration of the harp strings of his soul.

Finally he arose and began walking the floor with a quick, nervous tread, made several turns, paused before Jimmie, and in a tone bordering on fierceness, as he removed his great coat, and the white circle began to appear around his mouth, "What did he do to my little son?"

"He—he whipped me with a strap and drove me out into the street, and told me to stay away always," replied Jimmie, and then, after a little hesitation, he added, "He has been very angry since the night Mr. Snoozer was there, and—"

Grube had removed his great coat, except the right arm, which still remained in the sleeve, and he paused

as Jimmie mentioned Snoozer's name, flashed an inquiring look at the child, gave vent to a prolonged whistle and struck an attitude of surprise, and said, "Turned up Jack!" as he hung his great-coat in the closet. "Turned up Jack, count me one!" Then he drew a chair up close to Jimmie, took his numb little hands between his soft warm palms, and said, "So, Jimmie, he has been cross since Snoozer called, eh?"

"Yes, Papa; Uncle has been very angry since Mr. Snoozer wanted so very much money, you see, so much pay for the big papers which Uncle got out of the sack I found New-Year's morning, and Mr. Snoozer told Uncle that if he didn't pay, oh, I don't remember how many dollars, but a great lot, ever so much, he would tell all about it and have Uncle put in jail, and so Uncle had to give Mr. Snoozer a paper to get money from the bank, and promised to give him more as soon as he got through with his fuss with the lawyers—that's all."

"Just so," said Grube, in a tone expressive of deep satisfaction, as he released Jimmie's hands, arose, went to the closet, brought out a long black bottle labeled "port wine," drew the cork, filled a wine-glass and carried it to Jimmie, saying, "Drink this, dear, it will do you good and make you warm." The little fellow eagerly drank the sweet, delicious wine, and then Grube undressed him, taking off every article of clothing, brought from the closet one of his own heavy, silk, knit undershirts, warmed it before the fire, then slipped it over Jimmie's head and fixed it on him as best he could, lifted him in his arms, carried him to the bed, turned down the downy rose blankets, laid the child between them as tenderly as a loving mother would

her first-born babe, covered him up snug and warm, and said, "Now you must go to sleep if you can, dear, I'm going out a little while. You can watch Ben, the bird, up there, and the gold-fish in the aquarium over by the window, and you mustn't get lonesome." Then he kissed the child very much as mothers kiss their babes, and put on his overcoat, hat and fur gloves, and went out, locking the door behind him.

Passing along the dark hall, down the front stairs, out the front hall-door, down the stone steps to the pavement, he walked briskly up the street, just as any other man would have walked, in his haste forgetting his Kangaroo Droop and Boston Dip. Had he really forgotten it, or had his whole moral nature in that one hour been revolutionized and undergone a radical change? Had new impulses been born in his heart, and had the false, faithless, corrupt fop become the true man? Certain it is that he walked as other men walk, and with the firm, quick tread of the successful man who creates circumstances and molds them to his uses.

On he went, square after square, until in the fashionable retail business portion of the city, he entered a merchant-tailor's establishment and made some very queer purchases. Ah me, how some of the fashionable city belles who were enamored of Grube would have held up their hands in wild astonishment could they have beheld the articles of his purchase. Fortunately those ladies were not there, and so, in peace, Grube was permitted to conclude his purchases, and after ordering the same sent to his lodging-house, repaired thither himself. As he entered his room, he found Jimmie sleeping peacefully, his wan face lighted up with a blissful smile, and he stood looking down pityingly

upon him, muttering savagely between his closed teeth, "He shall never lay his cruel villainous hands on you again, poor little fellow, and for every blow he has dealt you, the keen lash of the law in the grasp of even-handed justice shall scourge him three times." Just then a gentle rap came on the door, and in response to his invitation the housekeeper entered, bearing a bundle which she laid on the center-table, saying, simply, "A package for you, Mr. Grube," and immediately went out.

For more than an hour Grube sat in his easy chair before the fire, smoking and reading, while Jimmie slept peacefully and wandered in beautiful dreamland. Finally he awoke, and as he opened his eyes, started and seemed confused. He rubbed his face, and looked wistfully around, doubtless believing that he was still in the mazes of a pleasant dream, and although the bird, pictures and gold-fishes were familiar objects, he doubted not that when full consciousness returned, he would be compelled to face the chilling realities of the miserable garret and the terrors of his uncle's anger. So he closed his eyes again in the hope of wooing that blissful hallucination, of remaining just a little longer in that sweet trance, and so escape, moment by moment, the horrible realities of life.

Grube coughed and dropped his book on the floor, arose, poked the fire and put on more coal. The noise aroused Jimmie from his blissful trance, and in an instant he was wide awake and comprehended the situation. With a joyful exclamation, he sat up in bed, glancing hastily around as if to assure himself of the pleasant reality, and Grube hastened to him, saying, "Did you have a nice sleep Jimmie?" "Oh, yes sir,"

he replied, gratefully, "and I feel so much better, may I get up now, Papa?" "Yes dear," replied Grube, ever so gently, "yes dear, but see how thoroughly I'll cleanse your clothes first." Then Grube went to the fire, took from the chair one article at a time, and laid them on the blazing grate. In a few moments they were reduced to ashes before the child's astonished gaze, who, as Grube proceeded with his cleansing process, cast questioning glances at his face. "Don't you think they are clean now, Jimmie?" asked Grube, laughingly, as he poked the ashes. "Yes sir," was the rueful reply, but—but what am I to wear? This shirt is too large, and then you see my legs and feet will be bare." "That is true," replied Grube, with feigned dismay. "That is true, and the shirt won't do at all, I'll have to cut off the legs of a pair of my pants and the sleeves of my best coat, and pin them up so they'll fit you. I expect you might wear a pair of my boots, so I'll just burn this old pair of shoes," and he committed them also to the flames. Then he took Jimmie in his arms, put him gently down in the easy chair by the fire, and started toward the closet, ostensibly to fetch the coat and pants, but paused at the center-table, took the bundle in his hands, and exclaimed, "Why, what is this?" As he opened the package, Grube burst forth in the same tone of surprise. "As I live, my little son, here is a handsome suit of boy's clothes, and I think it will just fit you."

"Oh, Papa!" exclaimed Jimmie, eagerly rushing toward Grube and clapping his hands gleefully, "are they for me? Do say they are for me." "I expect they are, dear," replied Grube, delightedly, "as there is no other little boy in the house. They were cer-

tainly intended for you by the good friend who sent them. Perhaps Santa Claus has just remembered you." Then Grube removed the knit shirt from Jimmie, and, as he did so, discovered the cruel welts which Skinner had inflicted on the child's back, with the strap, but he only ground his teeth together and mentally cursed the cruel old man. In a few minutes Jimmie was dressed in his new suit, and as proud as a drum-major on dress parade, but in the very midst of his glee, Jimmie stopped short, looked up, inquiringly—almost beseechingly at Grube, and said, "You bought these beautiful things for me, didn't you, Papa?" "Yes, dear," replied Grube, smiling through tears, "Yes, I bought them."

Jimmie stood still a moment, looking down at the carpet, and then suddenly seized Grube's hand, kissed it, and wept tears of gratitude. Grube lifted him tenderly in his arms, sat down in the easy chair before the fire, and rocked him as mothers, fond mothers, do their children. Then, when Jimmie became calm, Grube helped him put on his beautiful new Spanish cloak, nice fur gloves, and warm fur cap, then put on his own wrappings, and together they went out, to dine at a fashionable restaurant. After Jimmie's ravenous appetite had been thoroughly satisfied, Grube ordered a carriage, and they drove to the Palace of the Avenue. Alighting, they rang the bell, were admitted, and at once conducted to the library, where they were kindly received by Judge Dudley. They found him very busy, making up his case against Skinner, and Grube at once entered into conversation with him in reference thereto. The various points of Grube's evidence were discussed at length, and in minutest detail, together

with the general line of defense, and so clearly and convincingly did Judge Dudley reason, that Grube felt assured of Skinner's entire defeat.

"So this is Skinner's nephew," said Judge Dudley, nodding his head toward Jimmie, who sat before the fire, wrapped in wonder and admiration of the beautiful things all around.

"Yes, that is Skinner's nephew."

"Why he is well dressed."

"Yes, moderately so, but at my expense," replied Grube with a smile.

"Ah! I see, you are generous, Mr. Grube, and I have a high appreciation of it, I assure you; but are you quite able to provide for the little fellow?"

"Abundantly," replied Grube, coloring deeply, "and I shall see to it that he wants for nothing hereafter."

"And he drove the child out to starve and freeze?"

"He did, sir."

"He is a consummate villain, a heartless, soulless wretch as ever lived, but we will crush him with the strong arm of the law—utterly annihilate him."

"I feel assured of that," replied Grube, "but I have another point which perhaps may aid us. Michael Snoozer is somehow connected with the wretched business—is one of the prime conspirators beyond a doubt. I learn from Jimmie that Snoozer called on Skinner recently, and it appears they had a stormy interview, and also that Snoozer as usual, came off victorious. Evidently, he possesses valuable information in relation to this suit, and the result of their interview was that Skinner gave him a check for a large amount (doubtless hush money), and promised more, contingent upon certain events, which, of course, Jimmie could not

clearly comprehend, but it is significant that he is to pay Snoozer the money '*when his fuss with the lawyers is settled.*'"

"Ah!" replied Judge Dudley, thoughtfully, "I don't like that new feature of the case, Snoozer is a powerful and dangerous antagonist in any relation, and two such dangerous and villainous characters in close communion and league, augurs a deep-laid scheme for plunder and perhaps blood. But we will have to meet them on their own ground, and defeat them on their own issues. God is just, and right is irresistible."

Shortly thereafter, Grube and his little protege were being whirled along in the carriage toward their lodging-house, and, as they drew near, Jimmie timidly put his arms around Grube's neck, and, in a tremulous voice, asked as he looked beseechingly into his face, "Papa, may I stay with you as long as I live, I won't stay long, Papa dear."

Foxy Grube, the confidence man, the schemer, the fashionable financial blood-letter and champion of the gaming-table, leaned over the yearning child, and, pressing a kiss upon his forehead, said, with emotion, "Yes, darling, you shall stay with me always, and you shall be my dear little son."

Then, looking out of the carriage window up at the clear blue sky and raising his hand above his head, he continued in a tone of deep earnestness, "If there is a God, of which I have no doubt, may He now witness my solemn oath, that I will henceforth be a father indeed to this, my dear child, God help me!"

What? what? Foxy Grube repeating God's name prayerfully? Surely the millennium is at hand!

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FIERCE LEGAL BATTLE.

The trial of the case of Ralph Skinner against the heirs of Mark Barry had been progressing three days, the complainant being represented by two very able attorneys, or rather, they were his mouth-pieces, for he sat with them in court and managed his own case in minutest detail. The leather-like wrinkles of his face seemed to be fixed, and even more repulsive than usual; his eyes, cold gray and deep set under projecting forehead and long, coarse, white eyebrows, sparkled viciously, and his thin, shriveled lips seemed to have fallen deeper inward and drawn tightly over his toothless jaws. He betrayed not the least nervousness, unless the continual but scarcely perceptible muscular twitching about the corners of his eyes might have been so regarded. He was dressed in a suit of black broadcloth, of very old style of make, and worn to glossy smoothness. They were wrinkled as though just taken from a chest where they had lain many years, for the moths had made inroads, having eaten holes here and there, and made network of other portions. He sat grim and silent at the table, flashing looks of hate and defiance at opposing counsel, and anon scanning the faces of the jury, as though endeavoring to divine their thoughts, to note the impressions of testimony, and thereby conjecture their verdict. He listened breathlessly to the rulings of the court, smiled triumphantly when in his favor, and frowned and glared fiercely toward the Judge when against him.

The defense was conducted by Judge Dudley alone. He was a tower of moral strength, a fortress of honorable associations, a reservoir of wisdom and legal ability, and an avalanche of logic and eloquence. He stood alone, as the mountain faces the storm, and he moved, pressing back his opponents gradually, but as surely and irresistibly as the ocean tide creeps upon the shore. Backward, step by step, inch by inch, from point to point, onward, downward he pressed, until but a span remained between them and total annihilation—until but a hair line intervened between him and victory, but, alas, there he paused, for he could not cross it.

Skinner had shrewdly rested his case upon a single issue, viz., the genuineness of the signatures to the deeds, and stubbornly demanded thereunder official recognition by the court of his title and issuance of writs of ejectment.

The defense claimed that the deeds were fraudulent, the alleged signature of Mark Barry thereto having been forged, invited comparison with Barry's actual signature, properly authenticated; introduced testimony of experts in reference thereto, and of Barry's agents—the real estate firm in charge of his property—who affirmed most positively their belief that Barry's signature had been forged to Skinner's deeds; and brought forth as evidence, aside from the irregularities apparent on the face of the signature to the deeds, Mark Barry's letter to them, dated subsequent to the date of Skinner's alleged deeds, *in which Barry ordered certain extensive and costly repairs of the property*, and so the case stood on the evening of the third day.

Skinner was mutely jubilant as he went from the court-room, and hurried along the street with the light,

quick tread of youth. He ascended the five long flights of stairs leading to his miserable garret, two steps for one, bounding upward like a boy just home from school. The icy surface of his leather-like skin actually took on a faint flush and warmth, and a gleam of intense satisfaction flashed from his eyes. His smile, ever repulsive, and more like the grin of a wild beast preparing to snap at a foe, than like a human expression of satisfaction or delight, was doubly hideous, revealing the wild orgies of the worst passions of his utterly vile nature. One by one passed in review over his face the furies—"Acquisitiveness, Destructiveness and Malice."

Gain-lust led the van, waving aloft her skeleton hands and clutching the empty air, as though she would coin it into gold! gold! gold!

Revenge followed, keeping time with her own wild, hissing chant, and savagely whetting a bloody knife on a bloody steel.

Destructiveness came next, reaching aloft to grasp the lightnings, even Jove's thunderbolts, with which to crush the world, that she might gloat and revel o'er its ruins.

Last came Envy and Jealousy coupled together, green-eyed gaunt skeletons, creeping serpent-like, snarling, snapping, showing their wolf-fanged jaws, and darting forth their forked tongues.

Around and around within his soul, whirled the furies, screaming, hissing, clashing, until, from the very friction of their movements, his frozen blood actually began to flow, and that organ of his physical being, in others denominated the heart, began to pulsate perceptibly, and, wonder of wonders, the clammy, icy

surface of his body actually became flushed and warm.

And yet, dare any one assume that Ralph Skinner was *hopelessly* depraved? given over beyond recall to gain-lust and crime, so that no influences, human or divine, could possibly revolutionize his nature? Had light irrevocably vanished, and darkness settled down upon his soul, which, not even the glance of the Holy of Holies could penetrate or dispel? If so, then the kind Father of All is not all powerful, and there are things with Him utterly impossible. Believing that God is all powerful, we must also believe that there is no such condition as *hopeless* human depravity. Where there is substance, can there be an utter absence of everything? and where there is seed can there be such condition as *hopeless sterility*? With seed and soil-substance united, may not a gentle rainfall from heaven quicken to life and bring forth an abundant harvest?

Far into the night Ralph Skinner sat alone, utterly alone, in his miserable garret, alone in utter darkness, shivering over the heat-proof stove in which but a few sparks of fire clung to a piece of sulphurous slate and struggled for life. Alone he sat in his chair of state, muttering, grinning, chuckling, like a very fiend. Plotting planning, fighting the battle of the morrow and gloating over the field of his conquest, the wreck, the ruin and the plunder.

Finally, just as a snake seeks its den, he crawled up under the tattered blankets of his old straw bed, and sunk into a fitful slumber, and the furies reveled and held high carnival in his heart until the gray light of dawn came gliding in through his narrow window.

Promptly at the very moment of opening, Skinner walked into court and sat down at the table with his counsel. He looked worn and weary, but the fierce glance of his eyes was, if possible, brighter than before, and his bony, nervous hands crumpled pieces of paper, or toyed with pen handles as he flashed inquiring and defiant glances here and there—at judge, jury and opposing counsel. It is ever thus with evil doers when confident of irresistible advantage, but turn the scale against them, and the firmest, bravest villain will become the cringing, groveling sycophant and plead piteously for mercy.

But Ralph Skinner was confident—nay, *certain*—of victory, for against his strong fortress of apparent facts, his opponents had arrayed only shadows flanked by eloquence and supported by logic. True, his position had been fiercely and gallantly assailed, but it was still impregnable, for the enemy had been compelled to resort to gradual approaches and had established but one weak parallel.

While the counsel were discussing some minor questions of evidence and their relations to principles of law, a boy pushed his way through the crowd and delivered to Skinner a crumpled and soiled piece of yellow paper on which were scrawled a few characters which but imperfectly resembled writing, and down on one corner were some figures and a name.

Skinner rubbed his eyes, held the paper up in the light, and endeavored to decipher those mysterious characters, but only succeeded in making out that a certain person was in the corridor and wished to speak with him at once. Instantly the saffron hue of Skinner's face changed to ash color, and the defiant gleam

vanished from his eyes, giving place to an expression of alarm, and, folding up the paper carefully, he put it in his pocket, buttoned up his coat, arose hastily and went out. As he closed the door of the court-room, he saw, at the further end of the corridor, a form which filled him with apprehension, and he muttered to himself: "What on earth can he want, more money? He'll be the death of me yet, the vagabond! If I don't crush him he'll bleed me to death, but my vengeance will be swift and sure after I have *satisfied* these honest and pious heirs of Mark Barry."

Seeing Skinner standing in the center of the corridor, the man approached, and said:

"Compliments o' th' mornin' t' ye, Skinner."

"The same in return," was the tremulous reply.

"Ye looks well, hope ye be."

"Thank you, quite well."

"How're ye gittin' on in there?"

"Splendidly, the case is mine."

"Ye'll be scooped!"

"What?"

"They'll clean ye out!"

"There are no indications of such result."

"Aren't they? Well it'll pan out that a-way, if ye don't look sharp."

"What's the matter now, Snoozer?"

"Matter? Why ye've got just one chance t' win, an that means for y'r life, too, for if ye looses th' suit, they'll jug ye for forgery an' keep ye poundin' rock th' balance o' y'r days."

Skinner laughed—a hoarse, dry, hollow laugh, more like the hacking cough of a consumptive or the wail of a lost soul, than an audible expression of delight.

Finally, with a desperate effort, he brought the stamped wrinkles back to their proper places on his face, wiped the water from his eyes, slapped Snoozer playfully on the shoulder, and said, with a grin at jocularity, adopting Snoozer's slang, "you're the rummiest old Cove I ever saw, and you like to quiz a fellow just—just to *frighten* him a bit. But say, Snoozer, seriously, what are you driving at anyway?"

"This, Skinner, *Foxey Grube!*"

As Snoozer hissed forth that name, Skinner reeled backward as though a heavy blow had been dealt him, clutched the wall for support, and stood a moment swaying to and fro and quivering from head to feet.

"Well, Snoozer, what of Grube?" he inquired, hoarsely.

"He'll buzz on ye afore th' court this mornin'."

"What?"

"Are ye hard o' hearin', Skinner? I say he'll squeal on ye afore th' court this mornin', ye'd better bore out y'r ears so ye can hear, I don't like to throw away so much talk, it's hard work."

"But he don't know any thing that will effect the case, in the least, that is to my detriment."

"He don't, eh? Well now he does."

"What?"

"What! are ye crazy? didn't ye pass him off t' the notary, as Smith? and aren't that same notary my man, body and soul? I knows all about it, ye see."

"Yes."

"Yes? Of course I does. Well, didn't Grube see y'r deeds and read 'em?"

"He might have done so if he hadn't been too drunk."

"But he weren't drunk at all!"

"He was, for I gave him the liquor and—"

"*An' drugged it!* But it weren't no go, Skinner, for he sloshed it all on th' floor w'en ye weren't lookin' at him."

Again Skinner staggered backward and quivered as before, but almost instantly recovered his self-possession, and asked in a husky voice:

"How do you know that?"

"Well, I'll tell ye. Grube went t' quiz th' notary th' other day, so as t' get him for a witness for th' defense, but 't weren't no go, for, as I said before, that notary is my meat, belongs t' me, Skinner, an' had received his lesson from me 'bout that matter, an' so w'en Grube went t' him, he said—that is, th' notary said—that he (th' notary) was drunk that night, an' wouldn't swear t' nothin'. So Grube went away without makin' a pint, and O'Conner rushed right over t' my place t' tell me all about it; so that's how I found out that Grube would squeal on ye t' day."

"Is that all the information you have on the subject?"

"No, I have other, confirmin' th' same."

"Who gave you the information? What is it?"

"That's none o' y'r biz. It's a fact, howsomever, as ye'll find out t' y'r sorrer afore ye're two hours older, unless ye can stop it."

"Stop what?"

"Grube's mouth, afore he squeals."

"How can I?"

"Let out th' job t' me, an' I'll plug up his fly-trap so tight that he'll never squeal on ye or anybody else, or me name is not Snoozer! W'at'll ye give?"

"Five hundred dollars."

"Done! It's a whack!"

"But how can you do it? He's in court now, and if, as you say, he is to testify this morning, how can you prevent it?"

"Easy enough, but ye'll have to do y'r part. Ye jest set th' lawyers to quarrelin', no matter w'at about, an' keep 'em at 't all day, an' if ye can drown his squeal till night, why, I'll manage th' balance."

"How?"

Snoozer winked his little black eyes, glanced up at Skinner sharply, bowed complacently, and with mock gravity of manner, drew from his pocket a large bright red silk handkerchief, which gave forth a strong odor of cologne, wiped his face, took off his tall silk hat and brushed down its ruffled surface with his hand, while the corners of his mouth gradually crept back toward his ears, and the India rubber-like wrinkles of his forehead began to ripple, and his face took on a broad, hideous grin. Then he replaced the hat on his head, the handkerchief in his pocket, fixed his eyes on Skinner's face, threw back his head, drew his finger significantly across his throat, and made a horrible gurgling sound with his mouth.

"Ah! I understand," said Skinner, shivering from head to foot, "yes, yes, I understand."

"Jes so," replied Snoozer, still grinning fiendishly. "How d' ye like it?"

"To say the least, it would be very effectual, and I am not disposed to cavil."

"To w'at?"

"Find fault with the remedy."

"Oh, talk simple Yankee, if ye please—pure United

States, for I can't wrestle wi' these Latin jaw-breakers. But ye'd better skip back into court, or they 'll have him up afore the th' judge, an' ye 'll be left."

"True, I must hurry back to perform my part, and Snoozer, I shall confidently depend on you to do the rest," so saying, Skinner extended his hand to Snoozer, and the infamous league was ratified. Then Skinner turned to enter the court-room but Snoozer stopped him with,

"I never keeps open accounts, Skinner."

"What?"

"I don't do sich biz on tick."

"Oh, you want the pay in advance?"

"Ye were born a guesser, Skinner."

"Well, but I haven't it with me."

"After court'll do."

"I'll send you a check for the amount."

"Ke-e-rect, Skinner, but don't forget it, for Snoozer won't be trifled with," and so they parted.

On entering the court-room, Skinner held a brief but earnest consultation with his attorneys, and soon thereafter the battle of legal technicalities began. Fiercely it raged, now high, now low, here and there, until judge and jury became weary and the spectators' benches vacant. And so the hours dragged wearily along until night shades began to gather, when the weary judge adjourned court for the day, and Skinner had attained his object.

CHAPTER XIX.

CRUISE OF A HUMAN BODY AMID FLOATING ICE.

As Foxey Grube left the court-room, where he had remained all day, expecting momentarily to be called to the witness-stand, a lad approached and delivered to him a dainty, perfumed letter. At first glance Grube recognized the hand-writing on the envelope as that of a female acquaintance, quite a belle of her peculiar social caste. She was beautiful so far as that term may qualify grace and poetry of motion, exquisite mold of form and features. Besides physical beauties and attractions, she possessed a fine mental organization, cultivated and refined to the last degree, and therefore she was a beautiful danger, a subtle, charming, wooing peril.

Doubtless the sunlight of the world's first morning lighted up those vast mountains of ice near the south pole, just as to-day; only they have grown as the ages have floated over them, crowning their summits with the snows of countless winters—just as the head of Father Time has been whitened, for every wave which leaps upon them leaves some of itself clinging there, in solid, glittering masses. They tower heavenward, brilliant, flashing, vast mountains of light, and seem to stand still in mid-ocean. Their bases are continually washed by rushing cross-currents, and cut by awful whirlpools, and the ocean around them is alternately broken and lifted by awful storms, or leveled and held down by equally dangerous calms.

When the sea seems smooth as glass, and sunlight glitters on the crystal surface of those mountain bergs, the navigator finds his ship, with drooping sails, caught in a resistless current and drifting onward steadily—surely toward the whirlpools and the mountains of ice. In vain he listens for even the faintest sigh of a breeze—in vain he scans the horizon for even the shadow of a cloud-line, Nature's signal of advancing wind. On, on, speeds the ship into the whirlpools, into the cross-currents, then dashes upon the mountain bergs and settles down into unfathomable depths.

And that brilliant queen of the upper circle on the upper crust of immoral society was quite as dangerous to young and inexperienced navigators on life's ocean immediately surrounding her as are the mountain bergs in the Antarctic Ocean to navigators who venture near them at any time. She dwelt in perpetual calm, and about her were whirlpools and cross-currents, always setting toward ruin and death.

Foxy Grube was an ardent admirer of this fickle queen of hearts, and because she smiled upon him, flattered, dallied and fawned over him, he believed the false words of her faithless lips, and esteemed himself blessed by her love. Therefore, when he recognized her hand-writing on the envelope, his heart began to flutter and dance a hornpipe to the music of tingling nerves. His hand found its way into his pocket, and some of his money into the boy's hand, and then Grube broke the seal and perused the missive. "Tell her I will go at ten o'clock," said Grube to the boy, who bowed and hurried away, as did Grube toward his lodgings, but he did not imagine that at that moment

Michael Snoozer said good evening, as he bowed himself from the presence of Miriam Swan.

Rain was falling in a steady pour that dismal night, and the sewers were overflowed and streets flooded. The frost-locked river, swollen by the flood, broke its fetters and great masses of ice floated down and out to the lake.

While the sound of the great bells with clang and boom swept through the dense fog and darkness which enveloped the city, proclaiming the hour of nine, a man wrapped in a great coat and carrying a large umbrella picked his way carefully along the drenched and slippery pavement of State street. The streets were deserted and silent, and he could hear only the monotonous pour of rain, the roaring of sewers and the splashing water spouts, yet frequently he paused, looked back and listened. Why, he knew not, for certainly he was not waiting for anybody, had no appointment there out in the darkness and storm. Why, then, did he pause and listen? Pat! pat! tramp! tramp! came footsteps on the pavement, but he could discern no human form approaching. He raised his hand to his forehead to shade his eyes from the glaring light of the street lamp across the way, and gazed earnestly up the street through the still gathering darkness. Were the grim wraiths of danger creeping after him, shading his vision, dimming his sight? or were those phantom forms which pursued him, flitting stealthily by street lamps coming out of darkness into the light, and again disappearing in the darkness?

Suddenly the sound of approaching footsteps ceased, and after listening a few moments and hearing nothing more—nothing save the pouring rain and rushing

flood, he again went forward, picking his way cautiously as before. His curiosity, which bordered on apprehension, seemed to have been partially satisfied, as he kept straight on and quickened his pace. When he had traveled a square, two men came stealthily down the street and halted in the light of the street lamp, where he had paused to listen.

"It's th' game we're on track of, an' he smells danger, I reckon, from th' way he stops [an' listens," said one.

"Yes, an' we'll have t' take him on th' fly," replied the other.

"How?"

"He's got t' cross th' bridge, an' we'll have t' trap him there. He's suspicious an' on his guard; it's th' only show!"

"Aye—aye, and we'd better be about it, or he'll slip us yet," and so they crept almost noiselessly after the man whose footsteps were sounding more indistinct momentarily.

"It's a dismal night," muttered the man with the umbrella, as he waded through the slush on a crossing, "and the man who faces such a furious storm as this deserves some credit if not reward. Let me see," he continued, reflectively, pausing on the street corner, "let me see now—oh yes, I shall have to go over the Rush street bridge," and he passed on into the darkness toward the river.

The two men had crept along the street after him and stood in the deeper darkness of an awning across the way watching his movements as he halted irresolutely under the light of the street lamp on the corner, and so near were they that they could see even

his face, and whispered congratulations passed between them. As the man with the umbrella passed on, the two men stood very close together, conversing in whispers barely audible to themselves, accompanied by violent gestures. They were evidently at variance in reference to some important matter in which the man who had just gone from the opposite corner toward the river seemed to figure conspicuously, "Slip a knife into him," said one.

"An' stretch hemp for y'r pains," was the reply.

"Well, then, what *shall* we do? Talk fast."

"Jest w'at I said at first. It's th' only safe plan."

"Safe! y'r allers talkin' 'bout *safe* plans. Won't he screech an 'rouse th' perliece?"

"'Spose he does, they won't find anybody. 'They'll be slow 'bout comin' sich a night. Th' pigs don't hang out much, ye know," and so the argument waxed warm, while the man with the umbrella was walking slowly toward the river. Soon, however, the men stole forth from under the awning and went forward, turning into a street running parallel with the one leading to the bridge. They ran very fast, the pitchy darkness between street lamps, the slippery pavements, possible obstructions, and cellar ways carelessly left open, notwithstanding. They ran two squares at high rate of speed, turned west one square and came to the bridge where one halted and stepped back into a deep, dark doorway, while the other passed quickly over to the other side of the river.

A few minutes later, the man with the umbrella came slowly, carefully down the street toward the bridge, whistling a love tune, to which he kept exact time with his boot-heels on the pavement. As he

walked up the foot-way of the bridge, he observed that there were no lights at either end. He had noticed them burning brightly as he approached the bridge when two squares distant, but subsequently he was doing some very hard thinking and did not notice the lights disappear, leaving the bridge in intense darkness. "Singular," he muttered, as he ascended the foot-way and passed slowly along. "It is singular, indeed, I have never known that to happen before, all go out at once. Seems to me the police ought to be on hand to attend to such matters, but the miserable sneaks are always skulking, never where most needed. I'll venture to say that every mother's son of them in this vicinity can be found by warm fires in bagnios. Confound them."

At that moment a carriage passed him, going in the opposite direction, stopped on the bridge, and the driver got down from his seat, ostensibly to fix the harness of the off horse. He cursed vehemently, tugged away at a buckle, and struck the impatient horse with a strap. The man with the umbrella paused, turned around and looked back, but he could only discover the faint outline of carriage and horses, and did not see the carriage door open and two men creep stealthily therefrom. He could neither hear nor see the man who approached him on tip-toe from the direction in which he was going; nor the man who had slipped from the dark door-way, just after he had passed, and followed with cat-like tread. As the driver of the carriage climbed up to his seat, the man with the umbrella passed beyond the center of the bridge, paused, leaned over the railing and looked down on the swollen river with its fleet of ice blocks drifting slowly

downward toward the lake. He could barely discern the moving mass on the deep, turbid water, and the rain dashed in his face under the umbrella. "We will have a clear open harbor from here outward before morning," he said, and made a movement to pass on, when, suddenly, he was seized by several quick and powerful hands, and hurled headlong from the bridge.

A wild shriek of horror rang out over the ice field, and was borne back in mocking echoes from the fronts of the tall buildings on either wharf, and then floated away on the storm, if heard by human ears, unheeded.

"He's done for, Snoozer," whispered a voice on the bridge.

"Ye bet he is, Peel Eye," was the low, hissing response, and then the four men crept into the carriage, and were driven rapidly away toward the Sands.

Down, down, sank the body in the raging flood, down under the drifting ice, to the very bottom of the river.

Up, up, up, and the body sprang above the surface, spurting streams of water from mouth and nose.

A horrible wail of despair came from the bosom of the river, and again it was laughed back and forth from the buildings on either wharf, and borne away by the complaining wind. Then came a fierce struggle for life; a desperate clutching of hands on the smooth surface of floating ice, a falling backward and an agonizing struggle of a human form in the water.

Moments were ages to that brave soul, who would not yield nor obey the call of death. Moments multiplied, and the chilled blood flowed sluggishly in his veins, but he held bravely up, fighting back despair.

Gradually terror loosened its hold upon him, and

reason resumed her sway. The first awful shock had unmanned him, and for the moment he was unable to comprehend his situation; his animal instinct of self-preservation entirely controlled him, and he struggled blindly, unreasoningly. As he became calm, and began to think rationally, he realized the utter impossibility of climbing on the ice by simply clutching its smooth surface, and he instantly desisted and began to swim, pushing his way into clear water and working gradually toward the north wharf. He had passed down several squares, had reached a point where there was quite a rapid movement of the water, which, aided by the strong wind, was rapidly drifting the ice into the outer harbor. As he floated on in the darkness and storm he could see the faint glimmer of thousands of lights on either hand, just discernible through the thick fog and darkness, yet he felt cheered by their silent assurance, that just there, only a little way, was safety and comfort. Finally he drifted close to the north wharf, could almost reach the piles with his hands, only a narrow margin of ice, which still clung to them, intervened between him and deliverance, but, alas, he could not break through nor climb upon it, and so drifted on and out further into the stream. Suddenly a light flashed out from the wharf but a hundred yards distant, and his heart gave a great throb, sending a thrill of joy through his whole being. Deliverance had come; surely he would now be heard, and, clutching the ice with one hand, he waved the other above his head and—alas! his voice was gone, and his lips only uttered in husky whispers, "Help! help! help!" Only then did he realize how very near he was to the end of the horrible struggle, and he moaned and wept.

He could hear the steady and awful roar and thud of the lake waves against the piers and breakwater. He could feel the lake swell and hear the grinding and boom of breaking ice as it went beyond the harbor line and was lifted and thrown back by the lofty waves as they thundered shoreward. He knew that he could not pass that line and survive. He saw the lights of the city growing more indistinct, until, one by one, they disappeared, and he floated on in darkness.

Suddenly, far out in the lake, low down to the horizon, a brilliant light came flashing through the fog over the water. At first it seemed but a bright star, and he gazed in wonder. Storm clouds drifted across the sky. He could not see them, but knew they were there, for the rain dashed in his face. How then could it be a star? Were the clouds above and behind it? Wonder of wonders! Was it traveling toward the earth? Brighter and brighter, larger and larger, until it became as the moon at full, casting a flood of brilliant light like a pavement of gold on the water.

Ah! he had solved the mystery. It was not a falling world nor the moon, but the harbor's beacon lights! He was fast drifting to the outer line, and he felt a thrill of horror through his whole being.

He had been clinging to something—he knew not what; some huge object drifting by, grinding its way through the ice, something that towered above him and seemed to move by its own volition. The part to which he clung was flat and smooth and frequently twisted around, changing position, but he did not care to investigate. It bouyed him up, saved him for the moment, it was quite enough.

Boom! boom! crash! crash! It was the thunder of waves, and the breaking of ice at the outer harbor line; he was drifting, drifting on, on to death. Brighter and brighter gleamed the light-house signal, and the shipping in the offing grew less and less. Ah! what was that blinding flash? Lightning. What sounds were those which sent the sluggish blood rushing through his veins and brought a warm glow on his face. He tried to shout, but only a gurgling sound came from his lips. He tried to speak, but only a faint whisper came—"Help! help! help!! for God's sake, help!" A horrible groan escaped him; it was louder than the howling of the storm, and he shuddered as it rang in his ears.

"Hark! Mike," said a frightened voice very near, "what was that sound."

"Good Lord, what was it? Listen!" was the reply.

Again that horrible groan rang out, louder than before, and immediately there were quick footsteps, and some one exclaimed, "Merciful heaven! It is a human in the river. Show a light here, quick! My God, show a light! Bring the grappling hooks, quick—quick!" and a brilliant flood of light swept down from the deck of a vessel to the rudder of which clung that limp human form, whose ghastly face was upward turned and white as marble.

Three men leaned over the gunwale of the vessel, one holding out a large reflecting ship lantern and the other two working in frantic haste with a line. "Clang! clang! Jingle, jingle!" a pair of grappling hooks were lowered over the side of the vessel, the man in the water felt them fasten in his clothing, released his hold on the rudder, and then as he was lifted from the water, the light above him seemed to flash and

sparkle, the ropes, spars and masts of the vessel began to whirl and dart upward, a film came on his eyes and—he knew no more.

“Up! up, lads! Hi! hi! easy-a-e-easy, now! so! grab him now, there, good!” and the limp human form was lifted carefully over the gunwale, carried down into the cabin and laid on a bunk by the hot stove.

“Bring that light here, Mike,” commanded the Captain, as he bent over the insensible form, “bring some whisky here, Cook, quick! quick! Merciful heaven,” he exclaimed, as the light shone full on the face of the man, “why, as I live! Why—may I be blown to Mackinaw in a minute, if it aren’t *Foxy Grube*.”

CHAPTER XX.

MORE KNOTS UNTIED IN THE TANGLED SKEIN.

Ralph Skinner appeared in court the morning of the fifth day of the trial, looking, if possible, more weary and careworn than on the previous day, but the defiant gleam in his eyes had lost none of its repulsiveness, and his words and attitudes evinced a degree of confidence amounting to insolence. As usual, he sat with his attorneys, with whom he frequently conversed in low tones as the trial of his case proceeded. At first there were some discussions and legal hair splittings between counsel, some rulings by the court in reference to same, and then the case proceeded on the main issues. Then Judge Dudley arose and addressed the judge, "May it please the court, I had intended to introduce for the defense this morning a certain witness, whose testimony I regard as of vital importance. The witness was in attendance all day yesterday and prepared to testify, but this morning can not be found, and I regret to announce my utter inability to proceed with the case without his evidence. I trust that the witness, Edward Grube, will put in an appearance yet this morning or during the day—in which event I will be prepared to continue the case. I move that further proceedings be postponed until the witness can be brought into court." The opposing counsel offered some frivolous objections to postponement, but the court overruled all objections, and made an order in compliance with the motion.

Snoozer sat on one of the front benches, and while counsel were wrangling over the motion, Skinner cast toward him significant glances, and, in return, Snoozer leered and winked his little vicious black eyes in their almond-shaped sockets. The two worthies had met in the corridor, just previous to opening of court, and, behind a remote and obscure angle, had held a brief, earnest conversation. Therefore, when Skinner entered the court-room, he felt jubilant, and Snoozer, who entered soon after, was in excellent humor. However, as the court was about to call another case, quite a sensation was created by the entrance of two officers, one of whom advanced to Skinner, and the other to Snoozer, and read to them in low tones, warrants of arrest sworn out at the instance of Judge Dudley, in which the former was charged with forgery, and the latter accessory to the murder of Mark Barry. The former on testimony of Edward Grube and Patrick O'Conner, and the latter on evidence of Sandy Burns (who, having been arrested, had turned State's evidence) and Leo Cassell. Skinner seemed dazed, utterly crushed, and he cowered down in his chair with expressionless eyes, ash-colored face and quivering form. The name of Pat O'Conner, the notary, as a witness against him thrilled him with dreadful forebodings, and his guilty conscience lashed him into consummate cowardice. He arose feebly from his chair, and with mute submission followed the officer from the room, but Snoozer professed righteous indignation in loud tones, and offered objections in the way of physical resistance. However, the officer was no trifler, and by permission of the court, Snoozer was dragged bodily from the room by four strong, determined men and thrust into a

carriage where Skinner had been safely placed. Guarded by two police officers, who also sat in the carriage, the two worthies were driven to the magistrate's office and immediately arraigned on the charges mentioned in the warrants.

Skinner's counsel had followed, as had also Judge Dudley, and entered the office together in pleasant conversation, a few minutes after the arrival of the prisoners. The witnesses were all present except Foxey Grube, and a preliminary examination was held, which continued all day, resulting in the commitment of the prisoners and their cases being certified to the criminal court, pending the action of the grand jury. Counsel for defense made strenuous efforts to secure the release of the prisoners, but the magistrate, who was a man of strong will and prejudices, absolutely refused all bail, and the infamous conspirators were hurried away in the prisoners' van to the city prison, and lodged in cells behind strong bolts and iron bars. Counsel for defense were indignant, but the magistrate only smiled grimly and said, "Gentlemen, we intend to destroy this infamous gang of thieves and murderers, even though we may be compelled to strain a point of law to do it. You certainly have your legal recourse, and if, in the discharge of my duties, as I conceive them, I deprive your clients of any rights under the law, a higher court will not fail to modify or reverse my action."

Judge Dudley succeeded in having the prisoners placed in separate cells, and in different parts of the building. It was merely a precaution against intrigue and to prevent anything like concert of action for escape. He well knew the desperate character of the

men with whom he had to deal, knew that they would resort to any means, even murder, to escape the grasp of the law, and therefore determined that nothing should be neglected—no measures of prosecution or precaution.

When the door of his cell closed behind him, and Ralph Skinner was alone in the horrible gloom of twilight, he stood gazing out of the narrow window over the house-tops, and away to the banks of dull leaden storm-clouds drifting across the sky. A feeling of utter desolation and despair gradually crept over him while he gazed, and, for the first time in his wicked, selfish life, he felt utterly alone in the great world. He felt utterly abandoned and helpless, realized keenly the horrors of his situation, and yearned for human associations and sympathy. Was he wholly abandoned by the Almighty—hopelessly depraved? He leaned on the window-sill, still gazing upward through the gathering gloom, and watched the brewing storm in the heavens, and, relapsing into his deeply-worn rut of evil tendencies, he gazed with a kind of vicious interest. It was a scene in perfect harmony with the continual raging and wild orgies of the furies of passion holding high carnival in his soul, and, for a time, he seemed to forget the horrors of his situation, and to gloat over the tumult of elements as a vulture over the field of battle.

Lower and lower drooped the veil of night, deeper and darker grew the shadows in the angles of buildings, louder and louder moaned the wind around the gables of the tall roofs—pit-pat, patter-patter, rush! and a great dash of rain struck him in the face, but he moved not. The tall trees along the pavements, swayed

violently by the wind, tossed their mighty arm alofts and became giant specters joining in a wild dance, and beckoning him to break the bars of his prison cell, rush forth and be free. The wheeling clouds became grotesque legions hurrying forward to battle, and the rattling thunder and blinding lightning flashes were discharges of their artillery.

Suddenly, out flashed light after light along the streets, from windows of stores and dwellings, and street lamps began to glimmer in long rows, even to the utmost reach of his vision.

He turned and looked back into his cell. Only a darkness that he could feel was there, for he could distinguish no object—not even his hard bunk close by his side. Again, and with a shudder, he looked out and up toward the sky, but a pitchy darkness had fallen on the earth, and even the rushing, wheeling storm clouds were obscured. Still he continued to gaze out into the black night, and listened to the pouring rain, for he experienced a fierce satisfaction in the wild tumult of elements and in gazing into the blank darkness. His soul was in a night of horror and woe. Regret and remorse gnawed and scourged him, and grim despair usurped the place of hope.

“Oh God!” he murmured, “if indeed Thou art, how thoroughly canst Thou avenge Thy violated laws. Truly ‘the way the transgressor is hard,’ and death the sure reward of the evil doer. Oh, what a misspent life! How I have wandered ever in darkness, when light—beautiful joyous light was all around me. How I have crushed every fair form and spirit which came to love and comfort me, and how I have been wrapped up in self, petrified by sin and influenced only the

accursed lust for gain. Oh, my sister, how I blighted your sweet young life to further my own wicked, selfish ends, and how cruelly I drove you forth into the cold, wicked, selfish world, to starve and die, and at last to blacken the dark crime, how I abused and starved your child and drove him forth, also to die. Oh, God! Death! death! Horrible—Oh horrible.” Thus the self-accuser with sighs, moans and tears clung to the iron bars of his prison cell and told his crimes and woes to the darkness and storm.

And so the night advanced with steady, noiseless tread, until the great bells of the city solemnly proclaimed the hour of midnight. So preoccupied had he been with his own bitter, despairing thoughts, that he had previously failed to hear the bells, as they regularly told the hour. But at that moment the storm lulled, for a sudden calm seemed to have grasped and throttled the tempest, and through the stillness came the sudden clang! clung—clong! of the great bells. The sound startled him, and he retreated back into his cell in terror. The bells seemed like giant voices calling out to him through the night, in tones of thundering exultation, “Doomed! doomed! doomed!”

Just over the way was a tall, old-fashioned residence, and as the wretched prisoner crept back to the window and strained his eyes in endeavors to penetrate the darkness, the square, high roof of the building became a gigantic human head. The iron railing surrounding the square platform on top was a crown, the two dormer windows on the roof were eyes, the portico over the door a story lower down was a nose, and the large, deep doorway on the ground floor a huge mouth, puckered scornfully. There were faint gleams of light

in the dormer windows (doubtless a student burning the midnight oil) and they seemed as eyes flashing defiance. "Doomed! doomed! doomed!" pealed the bells, and the giant head seemed moving toward him. There was a loose shutter on the building and a water-spout of tin, partly broken down, at one corner, and these the wind rattled violently, sounding to him like the grinding of giant teeth.

"Doomed! doomed! doomed!" tolled the bells, and he cowered back from the window in horror. Doomed! He could no longer listen to that terrible voice; he would not hear it, the sound would drive him mad, and, crowding the ends of his finger into his ears, he sank down on his hard bunk and wept.

An hour he lay thus moaning and weeping—an hour—and the bells chimed one! Instantly he sprang to his feet, even while the solemn vibrations trembled on the night, rushed to the window, hissing horrible imprecations, thrust his clenched hand between the iron bars out into the storm, raised it aloft as he would strike an actual foe, and then his voice rang out as clear as bugle notes, "You lie! curse you, you lie! I am not doomed. I'll live to drag you from your place and sink you in the lake, curse you! Curses on those who made you! Curses on the men who bought you, and double—aye, a million curses on those who placed you there to sound my death-knell ere I die! They placed you there—idiots, to summon fools to worship. Worship! Ha-ha-ha! Worship what? God! Ha-ha-ha! God! Fie on such miserable superstition! God? Out on such vile hypocrisy! God! Fools, dolts, liars; there is no God; you know there is no God!" He clutched the iron bars with his skeleton-

like hands, wrenched them with all his strength, and rattled them furiously in their sockets; gnawed them with his teeth like an angry wild beast in its cage, and howled like a maniac. Was he mad?

The rain dashed into his face and the wind swept back his long white hair from his forehead, over which it had fallen, and he clung there to the iron bars, weeping, howling and blaspheming, until the bells tolled two! Then again he gave way to a fierce storm of passion, rattled and gnawed the iron bars, beat his head against them, until the blood trickled down over his ghastly face, and clung in clotted masses to his clothing.

Suddenly he became still. It was the calmness of exhaustion, and he sank downward, still clinging to the iron bars. He quivered and gasped, muttered exclamations of horror, and peered over the window-sill out into the darkness. "It is coming! I must hide—ah, ah! it is coming—I must hide, hide, but oh! Where is the floor? It has fallen into the cellar! Merciful—" His voice was gone, and he clung a moment, settling downward, his body swaying to and fro, and then his grasp loosened, and he fell backward on the floor in a dead swoon.

The rain dashed in at the window and fell upon him, and as the minutes glided by, he lay still and unconscious, until the bells chimed three! At the first stroke he moved, sat up and listened, grinding his teeth together, and clenching his hands until the long, sharp finger nails were buried deep into their palms. At the second stroke he struggled to his feet, again grasped the iron bars, and hissed horrible oaths in hoarse whispers, while he shook his clenched right hand at the

giant face across the way. At the third stroke his humor changed, and he began to whisper meaningless words. "Ha-ha!" he said, "what a joke it would be on old Dudley. Forty-five millions of miles to the new world, yes, I'll build one, a machine that will fly there, one big enough to hold and carry all my houses and lots and money, and I'll just fly away from this tangle and leave old Dudley to pay the costs. Ha-ha-ha!" and his shrill, maniac laugh rang out, echoed through the prison corridor, and floated out of his window, and away on the storm. "I must do it to-night," he continued, groping around his cell and feeling along the bare walls with his hands. "Yes, I must do it to-night, for to-morrow will be too late. I can fly away in the darkness, *and nobody will know where I have gone.* Ah, but I have no material with which to build it, only an iron bedstead and a few blankets, but I can sew them together and make a balloon, and inflate it with my breath, and then I can make myself small enough to slip between the iron bars over the windows, and then, as I sail away, I can laugh the world to scorn. Ha-ha-ha! that is the plan, and I'll do it."

Approaching the bed, he dragged from it two woolen blankets, tied the four corners together, so as to form a kind of sack of each, fastened them together with a strip which he tore from the remaining blanket, and then removed all his clothing except his shirt and drawers. Then, grasping the sacks in one hand, he approached the window, thrust out his disengaged arm and made a desperate effort to crawl between the bars, but he only tore his clothes and bruised his flesh. Finally he seemed to realize the fruitlessness of the endeavor, and his humor changed.

Turning away from the window, he stood by the door, reached his hand up to the transom and felt the iron bars fastened over it. "Yes, that is the plan," he muttered, "that is the plan. Church people say that man has a soul, and that it is thinner and lighter than air. They say that when it is disembodied it can go anywhere and that not even prison bars can detain it. Ha-ha-ha! What need have I for a balloon when I can make of myself one, and float away from all my troubles. Ha-ha-ha! That'll be a good joke on old Dudley, and he'll have to pay all the costs. Ha-ha! I'll do it." Then he felt around until he found the stool, put it down by the door, went to the bed, tore a long wide strip from a blanket, felt along the wall until he found the door again, stepped up on the stool, made a slipping noose at the end of the strip of blanket, put it around his neck and drew it tight, placing the knot behind his left ear. Then he reached up and tied the other end of the blanket-strip to an iron bar over the transom, tried the knot with his weight holding on with his hands.

"It will do," he muttered in a hoarse whisper, "it will do the work, and now, ha-ha! Justice Morgan and your Honor, Judge Dudley, I bid you, gentlemen, a very good morning. Ha-ha-ha! Curse you, curses on you, bloody hounds of the law, ever meddling with people's gains, curse you again, ah curse—" At that moment the bells began to toll the hour, and with a hissing shout of defiance and a horrid curse upon his lips, he stepped from the stool, which fell over on the floor, and his body swung around in circles dangling in the air. His feet knocked against the door, and his hands clutched the piece of blanket by which he was

suspended, and a horrible, sickening struggle ensued. Finally the hands ceased to grasp, the limbs straightened downward, a convulsive tremor shook the body, a gurgling sound came from the throat and silence again brooded in the cold, dark prison cell.

The prison watchman, as he made his morning round, discovered a ghastly, horrible form suspended by the neck, in a certain cell, and the same day a coffin was taken to the jail, a limp human form placed into it, and hurried away to be hidden forever from mortal eyes, in the bosom of mother earth. Not a tear was shed nor a regretful word spoken as the coffin was lowered into the grave, and amid rude jests and scornful comments, the wet earth was heaped above it, and Ralph Skinner was left alone to sleep till judgment.

CHAPTER XXI.

A CHARMING PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF DOMESTIC HAPPINESS.

Soft balmy breezes from the south came wooing the proud and beautiful "Queen of the West," one lovely evening. They sighed and kissed her, and sang sweet love songs, and she sparkled and smiled under a cloudless sky. In the twilight of that beautiful evening, while the night was yet new and the day was dying, Rudolph Merryfellow was hurrying along the street toward home, his little earthly paradise, yearning for the warm kisses and sweet welcome of his charming, busy, faithful little wife. He was sad—he was troubled. His business had all gone wrong that day, and he floundered helplessly in an ocean of perplexity. The failure of a business firm in an eastern city with which he was intimately associated, had caused him serious financial embarrassment, and financial ruin seemed inevitable. He was essentially a merry fellow by nature as well as name, and his spirits, usually buoyant and exuberant in the highest degree, but that day ice had drifted into the smooth, warm current of his life, and dark-browed gloomy foreboding, had glided into, and usurped the place of sweet-faced, joyous hope.

"I'll not tell her," he said, as he walked slowly along the street. "I haven't the heart to tell her. It is enough for me, a great coarse bear to endure the tortures of the blue devil without extending the invitation to his Satanic Majesty to occupy a place at

my fireside. No, I won't tell her, for the little rosebud would droop like an autumn flower touched by frost. I'm strong, and can endure any amount of hacking without experiencing any very serious results, and I'll just pocket the whole business and keep it all to myself. I never promised to tell her about my business misfortunes, although when I have a run of good luck, and pile up handsome gains, there is a sort of sweet satisfaction in telling her of it, she looks so lovely and seems so very happy, doubtless only because it makes *me* happy to be successful. God bless her! Now, I'll not even lisp a word of it, but will draw up my drooping underlip, drive away the frowns and meet her as usual, just as though I have made instead of lost a cool five thousand to-day. I'll laugh and frolic with her and play wild pranks with baby, and—"he had ascended the front steps of his home, and put out his hand to grasp the knob of the door, when it opened suddenly, and his dolly-dimple clasped her arms around his neck, and almost smothered him with kisses.

"Why, dear, you are late to-night," she said, "I had just about decided to put on my hat and go for you."

"Go for me?" he replied, as he stooped to kiss her. "Go for me? in what way? It appears that you are going for me now pretty effectually."

"And who has a better right, Dolphy?" she responded, laughingly, as she assisted him to remove his linen duster. "Who has a better right than your Dollie, your own wife? Just so I don't pull your hair too hard, you can't afford to lose any of that, you know."

"I should say not," he replied, as he passed into the cozy sitting-room, "I'm getting bare-footed up

there (rubbing the crown of his head), and doubtless, people already imagine that you are rather tyrannical. How's the cub? (leaning over the sleeping babe in its crib), he looks happy and comfortable."

"Oh, he's well and pleasant as usual, the sweetest, dearest, little darling in the world, isn't he Dolphy?" and she put her dimpled hand on his great broad shoulder, and her head down close by his just above the face of the sleeping babe. It was a beautiful picture. A moment they stood thus, and then she glanced around into his face.

"My! Why dear!" she said, hastily, pressing closer to him while the hand on his shoulder crept around his neck, "Why, you are so pale, and look so sad. What has happened? Are you ill dear?"

"Now; there you are again," he said, laughingly, as he sat down by the open window, and drew her down on the hassock by his side. "There you are, studying the lines of my face, noting the color and expression, and taking alarm if I don't look just so. Don't worry, little bird, I'm all right, only a trifle hungry, that's all." "Is that *all*," she enquired, emphasizing the last word, "are you sure you have not met with some misfortune to-day?"

The question startled him; he was not prepared for it; he expected to quiet her fears and divert her mind from the subject by the sly inquiry about supper. But her question came quick, clear and pointed, and it disconcerted him. With a quick movement he turned and looked down searchingly into her face, and he colored deeply as his eyes met her grieved, beseeching, inquiring glance.

Ah, how thoroughly she knew him; how she could

read his thoughts as an open book, and how thoroughly she had become a part of him—bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, and spirit of his spirit. Placing her white, dimpled, little hands in his great palms, and leaning over on his knees, she sat still a moment, looking up into his face. There was an expression of unutterable tenderness on her face, and an anxious, yearning look in her eyes, as in a grieved tone she said.

“Why do you wish to keep any thing from *me* dear? Am I not your wife? Is it not my duty—my *right* to share your trials as well as joys? Do you regard me as only a dear child to be fondled, indulged and loved? No Rudolph dear, God has given me to you for a help-meet, as well as for a companion, and though I may not need to weave, spin or toil with my hands, it is my duty to cheer, comfort and counsel you in every trial, and not only so, but I would not be a true wife did I not feel slighted if so ignored. If you labor with your brain to secure the means to provide for my comfort, may I not share such labor? Rudolph dear, must I sit here day after day through long years, buried in home duties, and know nothing of you beyond this threshold? Nothing of your trials, vexations and heart burnings? for they come to all God’s creatures, and you can not escape them. Is it my mission only to love you, to be faithful to my holy marriage vows, to keep your home in order and to minister to your comfort and happiness while you are within these four walls? Am I to share none of your brain labor? Rudolph, all things labor. The rivers run murmuring to the sea, plants labor as they grow, worlds labor as they whirl through space, and human minds labor ever. Have you anticipa-

tions of business diaster? if so, think of the many sleepless nights you have passed under like circumstances for which there was no necessity. It is human nature—human weakness to be continually fretting about imaginary threatening evils—to be crossing bridges while the rivers are yet far distant, and yet when we arrive on the shore, we find that God has prepared a safe way over which we may pass. So, dear,” she continued, creeping up into his arms, and pressing her soft, warm cheek against his, “so if you will not tell me of your vexations, I will apply the balm of my sympathy to your wounded spirits, and cast my sunshine into the darkness of your trouble, even though in so doing I may be compelled for want of knowledge as to the nature and locality of your ailment, to make a general application of all my remedies. So now dear, here’s the first dose, take it like a good boy,” and she pouted her mouth for a kiss.

“Whack! Crack! Slap!” Mercy what a noise! It startled baby who, gave a little grunt of alarm, aroused Towzer from a delightful dream, and startled the mocking-bird who was dreaming of Miss Mocking-Bird somewhere, until he danced around on his perch and began to trill, whistle and sing. The nurse who had retired for the moment to her boudoir in the attic, to arrange her toilet in anticipation of a call from her William Henry Augustus, paused just in the act of adjusting an elastic, and exclaimed: “Mercy sakes alive! Somebody has mashed a winder.” The house-girl who was arranging the table for supper and singing in a cracked voice, “Oh, Willie We Have Missed You,” paused in the midst of a heart-rending, ear-splitting strain, and inquired, “Missus did ye call?” while

the kitchen-wench called up through the dumb waiter-passage to the house-girl, "There now, you've done it; what did you break, Mary Ann?"

Merryfellow held his dear little wife so tightly that her struggles to release herself from his grasp were ineffectual, and she could only lie still in his arms and blush and quiver.

"My—my de—dear, do—don't ki—kiss so loud, you'll fri—frighten everybody out of the house. Let me get down now, please dear."

"One more kiss," he whispered, close in her ear.

"I—if you'll ki—kiss my way," she replied, putting her arms around his neck and placing her lips to his. "Well," he whispered hurriedly, and quickly there followed the tiniest little smack imaginable, accompanied by a dainty squeeze, and then she fluttered from his arms with burning cheeks and tingling nerves.

Just then the blaze in the lamp on the mantel ran up too high in the chimney, and, as she hastened to turn down the wick, her hand touched a paper which lay beside the lamp, and she called out, laughingly, "Do you know what a careless dear you are. What do you suppose I found in your great-coat to-day as I was about to pack it away in the cedar chest?"

"Don't know," he replied. "A thousand-dollar note?"

"No, not exactly, but some valuable papers. I don't know what; an official document of some kind; didn't read it all, only glanced here and there along the lines, and as I didn't find your name anywhere, didn't become enough interested to toil through those horrible, harsh, strange legal sentences. But here it is dear, I found it in the back part of the skirt of your great-coat, between

the lining and the cloth. Here it is, aren't I an inquisitive body?"

"Yes, dear," he replied, as he took the paper from her hand and advanced toward the light, "Yes, you are a charming little inquisitive body, but always to a good purpose; you're a jewel rare and radiant."

Then he drew the paper from the envelope, opened it, held it up to the light and began to read. She watched the expression of his face narrowly, as he proceeded. Watched him, because she saw that he was interested, and that discovery suddenly awakened within her an interest also. So she glided over to his side, put her arm through his, and looking up into his face, inquired anxiously, "What is it, dear?"

He was whispering the words as he read, and was so absorbed that he did not hear her inquiry, and she repeated it, "What is it, dear?" and she gave his arm a squeeze which brought his kind glance down to her face.

"Oh, why, Dollie, it's a very important document. Mercy me, I thought it lost. It must have slipped down through the hole in my pocket." And again he began to read.

"But you haven't told me what it is, dear," she replied, pulling at his arm.

"Ah, me, no; I believe I didn't. Why, Dollie, you could never guess."

"But I don't want to try; oh, I'm all impatience; do relieve my curiosity, do tell me, Dolphy."

"Well, what do you think," he replied, dreamily, "You would never imagine. It is the *last will of Mark Barry*, bequeathing to his sister, Mrs. Worsham, his entire estate."

“But what were *you* doing with it? How did *you* come by it?” she inquired, eagerly.”

“Honestly,” he replied. “I came by it honestly, dear, and I’ll tell you all about it at supper. But I must deliver this to Mrs. Worsham immediately,” and he hurriedly passed into the hall, put on his hat and went out.

CHAPTER XXII.

SAVED FROM THE DEEP.

The vessel aboard of which Foxey Grube had been taken from the river, where Michael Snoozer and confederates had thrown him from the bridge, was a schooner which had remained ice-bound in port all winter, but in anticipation of the opening of navigation, had been freshly provisioned and manned for a voyage. However, the breaking up of the outer harbor ice had occurred much sooner than anticipated, and as it rushed onward, it broke the vessel loose from her moorings and drifted her out into the lake. It would have been madness to have attempted to return to the harbor against the heavy body of ice which flowed outward, and being out, the captain decided to set sail and attempt a voyage up the lake.

Grube, soon after his rescue, indeed within an hour, so far recovered from the effects of his ice-water bath as to be able to sit up and drink hot whisky punch with the captain, a boyhood friend and playmate. This was their first meeting during five years, for the two men had drifted apart socially, and had not sought to continue the acquaintance. But there, that night in the schooner's cabin, as she plowed the deep, and gracefully rode the mighty waves, they lived again in the past, and were boys again. About three o'clock they crept into their bunks where Grube remained in dead slumber until the following noon, when, after having partaken of a hearty dinner, he felt, as he

expressed it "quite as good as new." On the fourth day out they sighted an inward-bound schooner, and as she lay to, Grube was safely transferred to her deck, and four days thereafter safely landed less than one hundred yards below the bridge from which Snoozer had hurled him as he believed, to death.

Grube went immediately to the Palace of the Avenue, and Judge Dudley being absent at the time, Grube was received in the drawing room by Kate Dudley, to whom he related his terrible exploit, and full particulars of his miraculous rescue and subsequent voyage. As she listened, her face grew white and she leaned forward and looked earnestly into his face. Her steady gaze embarrassed him somewhat, and he blushed like a school-girl at examination. She was deeply interested, why, particularly, she did not care to inquire, but the fact remained, of which she was deeply conscious, and she caressed the sentiment in her heart. "God be praised for your deliverance," she ejaculated, mentally, even while her lips uttered the words, "You have some dangerous enemy, Mr. Grube. The assassin wanted your life, not your money. You will not be so easily netted again, will go armed hereafter, eh? I congratulate you most heartily on your rescue from such imminent peril. I can never be sufficiently thankful"—she stopped short, without completing the sentence, colored slightly, seemed much confused, and an awkward silence followed, during which she tapped the carpet nervously with her slippered foot, and seemed deeply interested in the bright figures of the carpet.

Singular, she congratulated him on his rescue, and could never be sufficiently thankful for something not

fully expressed. Singular indeed, inasmuch as since their last interview she had secretly caused diligent inquiry to be made in reference to his character and occupation, and he sat before her entirely unmasked. Singular that she could not be sufficiently thankful for—what, his deliverance?

Grube comprehended all in a flash; his quick perception went straight to the truth, cutting through the tangle, and untwisting the snarl with the keen knife of penetration and the nimble fingers of thought. The knowledge thus gained set his pulses bounding—brought a scarlet flush to his face, and his voice quivered as he replied:

“Thanks, Miss Dudley, I assure you that if anything could tempt me to hazard another like adventure it would be the certainty of hearing from your lips expressions of thankfulness for my deliverance.” His words appeared to increase her embarrassment, and, without venturing a reply, she arose, walked to the window and stood gazing up the avenue. Soon her self-possession returned, and with it her stateliness and dignity of manner; but, as she turned to resume her seat, she confronted Grube, who had risen and silently approached her. She was startled to find him so near without warning, took a step backward and flashed a look of keen inquiry into his face. He was quick to respond, audibly, and with his most captivating smile.

“Kate—pardon me for presuming to address you by your Christian name,” he said, “but I feel that we are no longer strangers. Kate, I wish I could feel perfectly free to call you dear Kate, for you are that to me whether you will or no. Then, dear Kate, will you not accept my pure friendship, a brother’s devotion?”

There was a sly, cunning twinkle in her eyes which she could not restrain as he uttered the last words. She had heard of lover's offerings of brother's love, and well knew its quality and purpose.

"You ask," he continued, "who and what I am. I see the inquiry in your eyes, and here is my frank reply. By profession I am a gambler, but I bleed the rich that I may be able to give to the poor. I am utterly alone in the world, drifted here and there by every wind and tide. But I am capable of being a better man, and from this hour I will forsake my evil ways and strive to be true and honorable. Kate, dear Kate, even though you continue as now to frown scornfully down upon me, and in your displeasure send me forever from your presence, you can not erase from my memory your kind words of congratulation just spoken. They will ever burn in my heart as brilliant watch-fires penetrating the night which has so long enveloped it, and lighting me on to pure and noble ends. I go from your presence, Kate, a changed man, with new hopes and pure aspirations, and all that I dare hope for now is that, as you find me worthy, you will give me your friendship and confidence, that I may not grow weary and faint in the battle, and fall back into the ways of sin."

When he began to speak and called her dear Kate, she drew herself proudly up to her full height and cast a glance of withering scorn upon him. But as he proceeded, his manly bearing, and his frank and truthful admissions in reference to his character and occupation seemed to soothe her anger somewhat, and, as he continued in a voice low and musical, slightly quivering with emotion, spoke of the preciousness to him of

her words of congratulation, and concluded by asking only her friendship and confidence as she might find him worthy, and his final appeal, uttered in a whisper with musical inflection, seemed to touch a sensitive cord—to strike a new note which vibrated through her heart and produced a sudden and complete revulsion of feeling. Was cold, cruel pride at last vanquished, and had the sly little love-god winged a keen, slender arrow into a warm, sensitive heart? She stood before him with flushed face and a soft, dreamy light in her eyes. She did not shrink from his glance as their eyes met, but looked steadily, trustingly into his face, and in that moment a legion of new, sweet hopes were born one by one, and a silent compact was made, deposited and sealed up in the holy treasury of two human hearts united.

She had unconsciously taken a step forward, had made a movement to extend to him her hand and he to grasp it, when, as suddenly she drew back, saying, confusedly, "Father has arrived, is now in the hall. I will go tell him you are here," and before he could reply or make a movement to detain her, she had swept from the room, the door had closed, and he stood alone by the window.

At length a servant entered and announced that Judge Dudley would see Mr. Grube in the library, and accordingly he followed the servant out and up the broad flight of stairs.

Grube was kindly received by Judge Dudley, to whom he related his perilous adventure in detail. The Judge seemed deeply interested, as Grube proceeded, and when he had finished with the remark, "and still I live a witness to bring Ralph Skinner to justice,"

Judge Dudley replied, solemnly, "earthly witnesses are not needed now, for he has gone to his final account. Ralph Skinner is dead."

"Dead?" echoed Grube, "Dead?"

"Dead," repeated Judge Dudley, solemnly, and then related the circumstances.

"And how does that leave the case," inquired Grube, anxiously.

"It will go by default in favor of defendants, in fact the case has already been dismissed on my motion, and as Skinner never obtained legal possession of the property, there the matter ends.

"But Snoozer, What of his case?"

"He was finally admitted to bail--this morning, I believe, and will doubtless bribe himself clear. He is out of the grasp of the law now, and we can not hope to bring him to justice, unless—" Judge Dudley paused, looked vacantly out of the window, and began drumming on the desk with his fingers. He sat thus a few minutes in deep meditation, and then suddenly turning around to Grube said, resuming the conversation where he had left off, "Unless you think best to prosecute him for his attempt to murder you, he will, doubtless, be left free to continue his wicked career. I have had Sandy Burns carefully secreted for his personal safety, else, I am confident, Snoozer would have had him murdered."

"Will you manage the case for me?" inquired Grube.

"Being a State case, I can only assist," was the quick reply. "But, Mr. Grube," he added, earnestly, "You can rest assured that I will do my utmost to bring the villain to justice. He is a dangerous man, and ought not to be at large."

“Well then, to morrow morning, or when most convenient for you, we will institute proceedings against him, if agreeable to you.”

“Certainly, to-morrow morning, and the first move will be to have him arrested. I will meet you at Justice Morgan’s office at half-past ten o’clock and we will get a warrant for him.”

Grube remained a few moments longer, and then Judge Dudley accompanied him down-stairs to the hall door, and with a very polite bow Grube passed out, and the door closed behind him.

As he reached the street pavement, Grube glanced up toward a certain window of the Palace of the Avenue, but the blinds were closed, and he could not see the lovely form behind them, nor the full ripe lips that were pouted kissing toward him. He could not see the lovely, outstretched arms, nor hear the softly breathed words of endearment, else he might have gone raving mad from excess of joy, for Foxey Grube was an ardent, impulsive body.

* * * * *

“Papa, dear Papa, I am so glad you have come.” It was the feeble voice of little Jim which greeted Foxey Grube as he entered his room. “I was afraid,” continued the child, “I was afraid you would stay away too long, Papa dear—too long, for I am almost there—almost there,” and tears coursed down the thin white face on which death’s dew was gathering, and he held out his little white hands, through which the light shone as through glass, and turned his head feebly on his pillow. The housekeeper stepped aside as Grube approached the bed, and the doctor walked to the window and stood looking out over the house tops. There

was profound stillness in the room, save the sobs of him who bowed over the dying child and the mournful twittering of the mocking-bird in its gilded cage.

Hark! "Our Father which art in heaven"—it was the faint voice of little Jim in prayer.

"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done"—it was the voice of Foxey Grube in prayer.

"And forgive our trespasses, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Oh God, have mercy on my poor dear papa and make him good, that we may live together forever in heaven."

It was the dying prayer of little Jim, for even as the last words came from his white lips in a faint whisper, his clasp around Grube's neck relaxed, his nerveless hands fell by his side and his pure spirit passed to the loving arms of his angel mother, who stood waiting to receive him on the shadowy shore.

Foxey Grube bent lovingly over the still form of his child, straightened the little fleshless limbs and closed the lids forever on the sightless eyes, and then knelt beside the bed, covered his face with his hands and wept. Then the doctor approached, examined the pulse and said, as he turned sadly away, "The feeble machinery was worn out, and he would have died two days ago but for his determination to live until your return. The poor child has prayed for you constantly the past three days, and, Edward Grube, if the prayers of a little one who has never known sin—guilty sin, can, with the Great Master, avail anything for the salvation of a human soul, you must be led onward and upward into the glorious light of holiness." Then the doctor pressed his hand and went out, followed by the housekeeper, and Edward Grube was left alone with his precious dead.

There, beside the bed, clasping the hands of the dead child, he knelt through the long hours of the night, wept and moaned, prayed and repented the wrongs of his past life, but with the morning dawn, a sweet peace came to his soul, and he burst forth in a joyous strain : “Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God,” and then, “Just as I am without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me.” Surely he had found the true light, “the straight and narrow way,” and his feet were treading in the paths of holiness and peace.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEW DROP INN GARRISONED.

The Dew Drop Inn at the Sands was deserted and silent that beautiful evening. The throng of villainous human wrecks, which for years had held nightly orgies there, had been refused admittance that evening, and the doors had been closed and locked. A dim light glimmered through the window-blinds of the bar-room, in which a dozen low-browed, vicious, desperate-looking men were seated around tables, drinking liquor, smoking and conversing in subdued whispers. An air of mystery pervaded the apartment, and a strong and dangerous undercurrent flowed beneath the smooth surface. A dead calm pervaded, a calm more terrible than loud threats, blasphemy and boastings, for it was the awful ominous stillness which ever precedes the tempest. At intervals of distance around the building, and out some distance toward the city, stalwart and heavily-armed men walked to and fro, like soldiers on guard, while occasionally the signal of safety, "all right," in tones barely audible, passed along the line. The men in the bar-room were also heavily armed, and the place presented the appearance of a fort guard-room, from the formidable array of firearms in corners and along the walls.

"D'ye think they'll come, Bottle Nose?" inquired a stout, desperate-looking man, with a hideous, bloated face and bull-dog under jaw, addressing another with a pock marked, dish face, little deep-set, colorless bleared eyes and enormous nose.

“Think they’ll come, did ye ask? *Think!* Why, I don’t *think* at all, fur I don’t like to, an’ won’t *think* w’en I can git ’round it. But I don’t need to think ’bout that, fur I jest *know* they will. It’ll be hotter nor blazes here afore an hour, ye bet, an’ some o’ ye lads’ll have a show t’ die or claw fish right lively, or I’m a bigger fool than Tim Blinker, who climbed up one side o’ a tree an’ down on t’other, ’cause ’t was in his road, an’ he hadn’t sense enough t’ go ’round it. Think, eh? D’ye ’spose I don’t *know* w’at I’m chinnin’ about, ’specially w’en I seed ’em gittin’ ready an’ hear’n ’em whisper ’bout ’t at th’ perliece headquarters, not more’n an hour ago. Ye jest bet y’r bottom beer-check that they’ll come, an’ fight, too. Howsomever, we’re good fur ’em, I reckon, eh?”

“Ye better bet we is,” was the swaggering, boastful reply, in a quivering voice, as Bull-dog emptied down his rum-tanned throat a glassful of villainous whisky, while a tremulous murmur of assent and approbation passed around the circle, and then in silence each poured from the bottle and down his throat the poison which they called whisky, and so, amid whisperings, consultations, boastings, drinking and smoking, the moments glided along until the hands of the clock behind the bar pointed to nine, and then a sudden silence came upon them, and with white faces and fear mped on every feature, they sat still and listened.

Michael Snoozer was alone in his council chamber, walking the floor excitedly. His usually dead, sullen self-possession seemed to have entirely deserted him, and for the first time in his life his manner betrayed apprehension of impending disaster, for so he really felt.

Usually he possessed perfect control of his nerves and thoughts, but on that occasion he was completely unmanned, and for the moment powerless in the firm grasp of fear. He felt an awful crisis approaching; he saw the handwriting on the wall, and he felt his vile life trembling in the true balances of stern, blind justice. He had endeavored to nerve himself against the shock, which he knew was sure to come and could not be delayed. He had endeavored to force himself into sullen indifference as to results. His fears and judgment had repeatedly and vehemently urged him to fly elsewhere for safety before the law could again clutch him in its firm grasp, but his stubborn, defiant nature refused the counsel and government of reason, and, with a resolution worthy of a better man and a just cause, he remained to defy, and, if need be, fight the forces of the law if hurled against him.

Therefore the Dew Drop Inn had been converted into a fortification, fully garrisoned and prepared for desperate defense, and there, in the profound stillness of his council chamber, Snoozer awaited the onset with all the resolution and self-bravado of which he was capable.

Still, he wandered aimlessly in a dark labyrinth of uncertainty, and the horrible wraith of apprehension drifted around and before him, leaving him but one faint ray of hope. He must win the impending battle. He must drive back the forces of the law, and then the honorable mayor whom he had created must come to his relief and shield him from further persecution.

"Cuss him, cuss him," he muttered, savagely, as he ground his teeth together and snapped like a hungry wolf. "Cuss him, if I had him here I'd let out his

heart's blood. Sandy, th' blasted squealer, is t' blame fur all this, an' I'll have his life for 't afore he can ever squeal afore th' court. If Peel Eye can spot th' cuss an' bring him here, I'll fix him. I'll let out his heart's ——” He stopped short and listened. Hark! what did he hear? A rumbling sound approaching, faint at first, nearer and nearer, roll, roll, rattle, rattle! Ah! it was only carriage-wheels rumbling along the streets of the Sands. His yellow face had changed to gray, and he stood there in the middle of the room grasping the back of a chair, while his knees knocked together and his little black eyes started forth from their almond-shaped sockets. As he defined the sound, he instantly assumed his hitherto bravado air, and began again to walk the floor, but more impatiently. Would this suspense never end? Had the cowardly hounds of the law shrunk from their duty, and was he safe so long as he remained in his fortress?

Again he paused and listened. The rumbling of the carriage wheels had suddenly ceased, and, hastening to the window, he beheld the heads of the horses just visible around the corner of the house, and the carriage had stopped at the front door of the Dew Drop Inn. Again Snoozer began to turn ash color, and his limbs quivered as though a sudden palsy had seized him. Throwing up the window sash, he leaned out and peered through the darkness in endeavors to descry the carriage and occupants, but the effort was unsuccessful and he drew back into the room, closed and bolted the heavy outside wooden shutters, drew down and fastened the sash, approached the center table, poured out a large glassful of brandy, raised it to his lips, threw back his head and began to drink,

but stopped and looked toward the door. Hark! What did he hear? Heavy footsteps in the hall. Hasty footsteps, loud and heavy in the bar room. Had the enemy, despite all his precautions, slipped through his guard-line, obtained entrance to the house through stratagem? Had they overpowered his strong body-guard in the bar-room, and were they coming in hot haste to drag him away to prison?

As the footsteps approached the door, Snoozer put down his glass, rushed forward, turned the key in the lock, shoved the heavy iron bolt into its socket, stepped back and drew from the belt around his waist, a revolver with each hand, cocked them and waited in silence for the attack. He had barely time to assume that position when a loud knock came on the door, echoed through the long, dark, winding hall and might have been distinctly heard a square distant.

"Who is there?" thundered Snoozer, in response, and his voice in deep tones rang out, and his human cattle in their miserable dens near by heard, and, trembling, sat and listened. It was the peculiar tone of his battle cry, and well they knew it, and well might they tremble, for it was his challenge to mortal combat. Often at the Sands had that cry sounded out on the night, and just as often had he sent a human soul to its final and awful account. Therefore, when they heard his voice raised to that peculiar pitch, they trembled, listened and whispered, "*Snoozer wants blood. There'll be another body found in the lake.*"

"Who's there?" rang out again, and as no reply was made, for the third time Snoozer thundered forth the peremptory inquiry, "Who's there?"

“Open the door and see,” was the reply, finally in a half whisper. “Open the door and see.”

Instantly Snoozer’s demeanor changed, his fierce defiance became surprise, and his attitude of defense changed to one expressive of astonishment. Immediately he returned his weapons to their scabbards, hastened to the door, drew back the bolt, and, as the door swung open, he grasped the hand that was extended to him, and drew into the room Charles Barry.

“Why, man—why, man alive, where did you come from? Dropped down out o’ the clouds? I’m right glad to see ye, Barry, although ye’re not very safe here, if ye did but know it. D’ye know w’at’s up?”

“All about it, Snoozer,” replied Barry, “and that is why I came here. You will not be troubled until just before daylight, when you will be attacked by a strong force of police. How are you prepared for defense?”

“Fifty men,” replied Snoozer.

“And you intend to fight?”

“Why, w’at ’re ye talkin’ about Barry, w’at d’ye take me for? *Intend to fight?* I wouldn’t be at all surprised if sich was th’ calculation. Fight? Why, of course I’ll fight.”

“And have you no fears as to the result?”

“W’at’s th’ use o’ fears? ’Twon’t make it no better, only worse, I’m not gwine t’ be bamboozled around by a mess o’ pigs, set on by old Dudley an’ Foxey Grube. I’m jest gwine t’ stay right here an’ whip th’ whole city if they come for me, ye better bet I will. Hump! fear th’ result. Ye don’t know Snoozer, feller, ye don’t, not by a jug full. But here, Barry, I was about t’ take a sniff o’ brandy w’en ye tried t’ knock

th' door down, an' I jest got me lips wet an' me whistle in tootin' order w'en I set her down t' fight, I thought, an' there she sets yet. Come, she looks as if she wanted somebody t' swaller, an' I guess I'll do it. Come, pard, an' take a sniff." And so the two men approached the table, Snoozer poured out a glassful of brandy for Barry, and then their glasses clicked together and the brain-deadening, soul-destroying liquid hissed down their throats.

"Now, Snoozer," said Barry, setting down his glass, "you want to know where I have been since we last parted in this room, the night I came here with my head bandaged to cover up the gash which Cassell cut in with the butt end of the whip, with which I had given him such an elegant polishing. Well, Snoozer, you will be surprised to learn that I have been in this city ever since, I did not go away as you supposed, although when I left here, I fully intended to do so. But on arrival at my room, I changed my mind and concluded merely to change my quarters. So Nettie and I found a snug little place up town, in a respectable locality, and as Mr. and Mrs. Hooper, we have been living in clover. I have been watching your movements closely—knew all that was passing in court, was glad to hear that Skinner had stretched his tough old neck in jail, so he could pass in his checks without the aid of the law. But I was sorry to hear of your arrest, and again glad to hear of your release. I have had a spy at police headquarters the past three days, because I heard of Grube's return, and suspecting that you were at the bottom of his adventure, I was satisfied that steps for your arrest would immediately be taken. To-day, my man brought me information of

the intended raid on you to-night, and I determined to come and see, and if possible, run you off in my carriage to safe quarters until the trouble could blow over. Come, Snoozer, what do you say? Twenty minutes ride will place you beyond danger, and let me insist as a friend, that you will not be guilty of such weakness—such absolute insanity as to remain here only to be captured or to die like a dog. There is yet time, and now what do you say? Come, will you go?"

"Barry, I'm not that kind of a fish-bone," replied Snoozer, doggedly. "I never lights out from danger, always faces the fire, an' I'm not gwine t' sneak off now w'en a squad o' pigs threaten t' gobble me. They've tried that on before, have allers got licked, an' I 'spect we can do it again. Anyhow, I intend t' stay right here, an' ye needn't chin any more about 't, for 'twon't be no use. I'm not gwine to be——" Snoozer stopped, raised his hand and whispered, "Hark?" listened, and then in a flash glided noiselessly to the door. "Someone in the hall!" he whispered to Barry, who had followed him on tip-toe and stood beside him. "Someone in the hall—hark! d'ye hear him slippin' along the way?" Barry nodded his head, and then both stood still and listened. "He's slippin' towards the door here," whispered Snoozer, drawing his revolver and cocking it, and at that moment there came on the door a light tap, and Snoozer called out in his ordinary tone, "Who's there?"

"Me," replied a faint voice, and yet the tone was gruff. "Me, Snoozer, can I see ye right away? I'm in a big hurry." "Certa'n ye can," replied Snoozer, replacing his pistol in his belt, and then, as he withdrew the bolt and swung open the door, Peel Eye came cring-

ing sidewise into the room, holding his slouch hat in one hand and pulling his scalp lock in obeisance with the other. "Certa'n ye can see me," repeated Snoozer, closing the door behind Peel Eye. "Ye're th' kind o' chap w'at suits me, pard. Th' rale true grit w'at fetches 'em every pop. Th' only feller at th' Sands worth a straw t' send on a smellin' job w'en there's sharp work to do."

"Yes, ye-e-s," mumbled Peel Eye, insolently, still twitching his scalp lock, while an expression of low cunning passed over his face, "Ye-e-s," he drawled, wagging his head and glancing at Barry and Snoozer, alternately, questioningly "Ye-e-s!"

"Well, w'at's up, Peel Eye?" inquired Snoozer, impatiently. "W'at are ye standin' there for chinnin' 'bout ye-e-s for?"

"W'at's up! did ye say? Up? Why th' devil's up an' no pitch hot. Up? W'at d'ye think? Couldn't trap th' cuss—" He stopped short, as though he had bitten his tongue, glanced into Barry's face, and then inquiringly into Snoozer's, then up at the ceiling and began to whistle.

"That's Barry, he's all right, Peel Eye, spit it out!"

"Well," replied Peel Eye, cramming a large piece of tobacco into his mouth, "Well as I was sayin' I couldn't trap th' cuss, Sandy, so as t' fetch him here as ye counted on. He wouldn't bite worth a cent, an' so I had t' do th' next best thing, which was t' get him whar ye could go an' squelch him agreeable t' y'r mind an' wishes as ye talked w'en I went away."

"Where is th' cuss?" inquired Snoozer, savagely clutching the handle of a Bowie-knife which hung in

its scabbard on his hip, "Where is th' miserable varment?"

"Don't know where he is at this moment," replied Peel Eye, blinking his bleared eyes and pulling his scalp lock vigorously. "Don't know jest where he is now, but I can tell ye where he will be at ten o'clock, leastwise he promised to meet me. If that'll do ye any good, I can tell ye that."

"Well, out wi' 't," hissed Snoozer, grasping the back of a chair, raising it up and bringing it down violently on the floor, "Spit it out, where will he be?"

"Well, Snoozer," replied Peel Eye, not in the least, intimidated by Snoozer's violence, "I'll have t' tell ye a story afore ye can understand, an' so ye must be patient until I can come t' th' p'int. Now, here 'tis, I found Sandy, after a long hunt, in Mag Hopper's catch-'em-quick, over on West side. He was orful skeared w'en he seed me, an' showed fight cause he knows w'at a slippery lubber I am, an' that me an' you be jined together, somewhat, leastwise we work with one fork, pitchin' round, an' that we go in th' same shoes an' ride in th' same boat. Well, Snoozer, I said to him, 'Why, Sandy, w'at d'ye take me fur? D'ye 'spose I belongs t' Snoozer. If ye do, ye are mightily beat for onct, for I've broke loose from him long while back, an' now I have t' skip round right lively t' keep out o' his way. Where've ye been this long while back?' Then he put up his shootin' iron an' we shook hands, an' we 'gratulated each other on gettin' out o' y'r clutches an' bein' free men, an' then he told me where he'd bin, an' all 'bout how old Dudley found out 'bout his chuckin' Barry overboard, which news

knocked me clean off my pins, for who'd a thunk it, ye can't guess in a hundred years how it was."

"I don't want t' try," replied Snoozer, impatiently. "How did he find it out?"

"Why, through that feller Cassell, an' how d'ye spose *he* found 't out? Why, through Snoozer, by Jingo!"

"W'at d'ye mean?" demanded Snoozer, savagely. "It's a cussed lie. I'll cut y'r miserable heart out, if ye talks that a-way t' me, ye blackguard," and grasping the handle of his Bowie-knife, he drew it from its scabbard and advanced toward Peel Eye, with his hand raised threateningly. The bright blade glittered in the light as Snoozer held it aloft, but Peel Eye stood still and grinned viciously. He had drawn a revolver from under his coat, cocked it and stood on the defensive, ere Snoozer detected the movement, and realized that Peel Eye was master of the situation.

"Ye don't want t' butcher y'r best friend, Snoozer," said Peel Eye, soothingly. "Ye don't want t' butcher y'r best friend, I hope, 'specially w'en he's working for ye like a beaver, an' jest cause he tells ye w'at that cuss Sandy said."

"That's so, Peel Eye," replied Snoozer, mollified. "That's so," and he returned the knife to its scabbard, and added, "Spit it out, Peel Eye, tell us all th' blackguard said." "Well, now ye talk sense," said Peel Eye, putting up his weapon. "Now, Snoozer, ye talks like y'rself, an here's w'at he said 'bout ye. He said that Cassell said that one day—th' day ye went to see th' body at th' morgue, which ye thought was Sandy, he met ye on the street as ye went from there t' meet Mr. Barry, who was at the Nose Paint. Well, ye

stopped on the street awhile t' kinder rest, an' ye leaned 'gainst a lamp post on a corner, an' begin chin-nin' t' y'rself, as ye do sometimes, an' he stood near. Cassell, I mean, an' hearn all ye said, an' ye let th' cat out o' th' bag, an' he caught her. Well, that's how Cassell found out about it, for Cassell told him, of course, an' that's how they come t' hunt Sandy up, an' promised t' let him go free if he'd squeal on ye."

While Peel Eye talked, Snoozer walked the floor like a caged lion, gnashing his teeth, and muttering horrible curses. His hands played viciously with the weapons in his belt; his face grew black and foam oozed from his lips. As Peel Eye concluded, Snoozer stopped before him and said in a voice husky with suppressed rage, "W'at're ye stoppin' for? Spit it all out—*All!*"

"Well, Snoozer, I'm comin' t' that arter awhile, but I'd like t' wet me whistle a bit, for it's dry an' won't toot," and he glanced wistfully toward the bottle of brandy on the table.

"Well, take a sniff," replied Snoozer, continuing his walk, and muttering curses. "Take a sniff an' be in a hurry about it."

Peel Eye went sidewise to the table, keeping his face toward Snoozer, and watching his every movement, seized the bottle with eager, quivering hands, poured out a full glass of liquor, tossed back his head, and with eyes still fixed on Snoozer, swallowed the brandy at one gulp. As he straightened up, he sat down the glass, smacked his lips and said, "That's good stuff, an' no mistake, an' now t' continner, I paid fur th' drinks wi' y'r money Snoozer, an' Sandy got it up his nose rale bad, an' his tongue got loose an' he rattled out all he knew, which I jest told ye, well

then I says t' Sandy, 'you nor me can't be free men while Snoozer lives, an' I motion we make it up somehow t' throttle him.' 'Eh? that's a go,' says he, 'but w'en 'll we do it, an' how?' 'To-night, sez I, an' I'll tell ye how. Snoozer's goin' over t' see his duxey-truxey, Miriam Swan, t'-night, an' we 'll catch him on th' bridge, slip a knife into him, an' drop him into th' drink, eh?' 'That's a go' sez he, 'an' I'll meet ye there at ten o'clock or thereabouts.' So, Snoozer, we shook hands on 't, an' here I be, an' that am th' end on 't."

Snoozer paused before Peel Eye, grasped his hand, shook it warmly, and said, "Good! good! y're sharp as tacks, Peel Eye, ye be fur a fact, an' I likes ye fust best, an' ye shall lose nothin' by stickin' t' Snoozer. Here," he continued, drawing a roll of bank notes from his pocket, "Here, Peel Eye, I knows how t' reward me friends, take this," and he thrust a large bill into Peel Eye's hand, then Snoozer turned to Barry and said, excitedly, "Pard, if we can throttle th' buggar don't ye see we're all right? There won't be no case against us, leastwise you'll be clear, an' th' will o' ole Barry bein' gone, destroyed no doubt, don't ye see you'll come in for y'r share o' th' property. Th' thing looks brighter, a good deal brighter, an' we've got th' world by th' throat yet, hurrah! But we must squelch Sandy now, this very night, for it is our only chance."

Glancing up at the clock, he was about to add some remark, when that busy little machine stopped ticking an instant, gave forth a sharp whirring sound, and then continued its busy marking of time as though nothing unusual had occurred.

Snoozer burst forth in a loud laugh, approached the mantel, put his hand upon the clock and caressed it,

saying confidentially to it, "All right me little sweetheart, all right, I understand ye." Then turning around and addressing Barry, he said, "Th' clock says it's all right, an' that we must be in a hurry 'bout 't. We've half an hour t' get there. W'at d'ye say?"

"It is just the plan," replied Barry, eagerly, "but my team will make the distance in ten minutes. Therefore I would suggest that Peel Eye go on afoot, meet Sandy, get him on the bridge, and then we will follow and trap him."

"That's good," replied Snoozer, and accordingly Peel Eye hurried away, while Snoozer and Barry lighted fresh cigars and sat down by the table to drink poison and plot murder.

As Peel Eye closed the door and hurried along the hall he began to chuckle, and when he had passed a safe distance beyond Snoozer's outer guard line, he broke forth into a mocking, triumphant laugh, and muttered, savagely, "Ye'd stick a feller like a dog, would ye? oh-ha! Two can play at that game, I reckon," and he hurried forward toward the city. Finally he came to one of the main north and south streets, halted under a street lamp, and placing his fingers in his mouth, gave, at brief intervals, three low whistles. Then he stopped and listened, whistled again, listened, and finally ejaculated, "oh-ha!" as he heard quick footsteps approaching, and a few moments later three men came out of the darkness and advanced toward him.

"Is that you, Peel Eye?" inquired one, in a low tone.

"Ye bet!"

"What luck?"

"Good! Good luck; its all right," and then followed a hurried whispered consultation, and finally the four men hurried away down the street, toward the river.

Twenty minutes later a carriage containing two men was driven at a furious speed by the same corner where the four men had held the consultation, turned down the main street toward the center of the city, and ere long arrived at a certain bridge which spans the river. Near the northern bridge approach the carriage halted at a street corner, and the two men alighted under the light of a street lamp.

"Not here," said the small man, disappointedly. "Not here yet; can we have passed him on the way? He has certainly had sufficient time." "No, he's not here, drat th' cuss," said the other, as the carriage rolled away, let's step into this doorway out o' the light. We're on rather ticklish ground here, 'specially if a perliece should spot us." "That's true," replied the other, and they stepped quickly back from the light.

"Snoozer," exclaimed the other in a startled, tremulous whisper, as he grasped his companion's arm. "Do you hear that, Snoozer?"

"Hear w'at, Barry?" was the quick reply.

"There's some one behind us in the doorway; I can hear them breathe?"

At that instant a police officer sprung his rattle just across the street, and was answered by another on the bridge, by another, and still another up and down the street.

"Trapped," whispered Barry, grasping Snoozer's arm again.

"Trapped," replied Snoozer, savagely, as with each hand he drew a pistol from his belt, and then dashed forward into an alley a few paces to his right, followed by Barry, who had also drawn his pistols, and prepared for defense. As the two men ran at their utmost

speed they could hear police rattles sounding in every direction, and as Barry glanced back over his shoulder he could see four men following rapidly. As they came to an open court on their right, they saw five men enter the alley and advance toward them, completely cutting off their retreat in that direction. With a howl of rage, Snoozer made a sudden dash to the right into the paved court, but Barry, not anticipating his flank movement, in time to make the turn successfully, slipped on a loose stone, fell headlong to the ground, rolled over against the wall and lay perfectly still, bruised and stunned by the fall. A moment later the pursuers rushed by after Snoozer, and Barry was for the moment safe. Instantly he arose on his hands and knees, crept across the alley into a narrow passage way between tall buildings, crawled along through the slush of the gutter, and finally down into the cellar of an abandoned building, where he crouched tremblingly down behind a pile of old barrels.

Snoozer ran down the court until he came to the solid wall at the further end, where he paused and glanced to the right. Only the square corner of a solid wall there. Then he glanced to the left, a square corner of a solid wall there, also, and the dread sound of his pursuers' feet on the stone pavement of the court was echoed and re-echoed from those solid, frowning walls, and seemed as human voices mocking, jeering, gloating over his despair.

"Ye think ye've trapped me, eh?" he hissed, turning toward his pursuers like a wild beast at bay. "Ye think ye've trapped me? Not yet, me hearties, not yet," and in his fury he sprang forward against a door, but it was solid, and he reeled backward, recoiling

from the shock. Glancing back over his shoulder he saw his pursuers advancing cautiously not a hundred yards distant, and with a horrible oath and a fiendish yell he made another dash against the door which gave way before him, and he plunged headlong into a room, having broken the door-lock. Instantly he sprang to his feet, closed the door, placed his back against it, drew his Bowie-knife, placed it between his teeth, and with a cocked pistol in each hand, awaited the attack. He had broken into a sleeping-room, for the moment unoccupied, but a lamp on a table burned dimly, and he looked eagerly around for another avenue of escape. The first glance revealed to him his desperate situation, for there was but one other opening in the room than the door through which he had gained entrance, and that a narrow window on the opposite side, through which he could see the light from the lamp on the table shining against a solid brick wall, just beyond a narrow footway or passage between the buildings, and he knew that it would be utter madness to attempt further flight. No, he would stand his ground and fight, and in his rage and despair he felt himself the equal of a dozen men in hand-to-hand conflict. Why did not the enemy charge? He waited and listened—all was silence. He could hear only the loud pulsations of his own heart. Could it be possible that they had abandoned the pursuit even when he was within their very grasp? Did nine hirelings of the law fear to attack one desperate man? Truly he began to believe so, and gave vent to a sigh of relief. "Cusses on 'em," he muttered, triumphantly, "Cuss the cowardly dogs, they know and fear Michael Snoozer, and——" At that instant the head and shoulders of a man

appeared above the sill of the open window, a cocked pistol was pointed at his head, and the stern voice of Sandy Burns rang out, "Snoozer, I want you!"

'Take that!' was the defiant reply, and simultaneously two shots rang through the room, and Snoozer felt a sharp pain in his left shoulder, while Sandy Burns swung his hands above his head, fixed a stony glare on Snoozer's face, and then fell at full length backward on the pavement of the passage-way—stone dead. Immediately there came a heavy shock against the door, which threw Snoozer forward, half across the room, and, as the door swung violently open, eight pistols were pointed at Snoozer's breast.

"Surrender or die!" was the awful summons, but in his insane rage Snoozer was insensible to fear. The face of Peel Eye was before him, leering, grinning fiendishly, and the hand of Peel Eye grasped a weapon which pointed at Snoozer's breast. As he stood, like a wild beast at bay, glaring into the faces of his pursuers, the awful summons again rang out, "Snoozer, surrender or die!"

"Never! miserable dogs!" he hissed, over the blade of the knife which he held in his teeth, "Never!" and, quick as thought, he raised the pistol in his right hand and pulled the trigger. Instantly there were eight sharp reports successively, and Michael Snoozer fell forward headlong to the floor, while Peel Eye reeled and fell backward on the pavement of the court—dead. Then the officers entered the room and turned Snoozer over on his back, but he only gasped and shuddered as his wicked soul took its flight, to appear for judgment before the bar of an offended God.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHARLES BARRY IN HIDING IS ATTACKED BY FIERCE AND DANGEROUS FOES.

Charles Barry crouched, tremblingly, down behind the pile of old barrels in the cellar of the deserted house, where he had found refuge from pursuit, and he listened breathlessly for sounds of the conflict between Snoozer and the officers—a conflict which he knew could not be averted, nor long delayed. He was familiar with the locality, knew that Snoozer's retreat would be cut off by the solid wall at the end of the court, and, knowing Snoozer's desperate, bull-dog nature and the determined character of his pursuers, he realized that some one would have to die. "You can pass in your checks now, Snoozer, for the game is up with you forever," he whispered.

Suddenly he heard two sharp reports of firearms, almost simultaneously, and a few moments later a loud volley, and then a dead and painful silence followed. He could hear the beating of his own heart, and he imagined that it could be heard on the street by the stealthy searchers after the lost prison-bird. He trembled in every limb, each muscle twitched and quivered, not from fear, but nervous excitement, and his guilty conscience racked and scourged him, until his brain seemed on fire and his heart cold as ice.

"My God," he moaned, "I will not endure this. It is the very torment of the damned. Hunted down like a wild beast, and driven into a thousand horrors of

mind and body, I would rather die than longer endure it. I will not stay. It is cowardly to crouch down here in this filthy place like a frightened dog, when by one bold dash I might regain my freedom—surely maintain my manhood. No, I'll not stay here like a cringing coward, but I'll go boldly out on the street and walk to the Sands, and if anybody dares hinder or oppose me, *like Snoozer, I'll fight!*”

While thus thinking, he had risen, walked to the opening and taken two steps upward, when he paused and listened. What did he hear? Why did he rush back into the cellar, and cower down behind the pile of old barrels? And why did he creep along the wall, and feel on it with his quivering hands? Hark! Footsteps sounded on the pavement of the alley, voices echoed along the passage-way leading to the cellar, and his pursuers were close on his track. Ah! What had his hands touched, as he crept along the wall? The opening of a drain pipe—a cellar sewer! His trembling hands were thrust into the opening, in frantic haste he felt back as far as he could reach, and found it unobstructed. It was barely large enough to admit his body; it would require a desperate effort to force himself into it—only a twenty-inch pipe—but he would try, it was his only hope of escape. He drew his pistols from his belt, put them on the ground by the opening, and then crept backward into the sewer, pushing on the ground with his hands with all his strength, until he had forced his body completely into the pipe, and then, reaching out, he drew an old barrel up, so as to obscure the entrance, and grasped his pistols, just as a light from a dark lantern flashed down into the cellar through the opening from the passage way above,

and seven men came down into the cellar and began to search for the fugitive.

The search was vigorous and thorough. The pile of old barrels was pulled down and overhauled; every nook and corner received due attention, but the one barrel which stood by the wall remained untouched, and the human body, wedged down into the sewer pipe behind it, was unobserved.

"Not here," said one, who seemed to be in command of the party. "Not here," and he flashed his lantern around the cellar for the last time, ejaculating disappointedly, "Not here. Are you sure he came into the passage way, Burke?"

"Yes sir," was the reply, "I saw him run across the alley on his hands and knees. He was skulking by the corner when we passed into the court following Snoozer."

"Well, he's not here, that's certain. Come, boys, no use to kick around those old barrels any longer," and they passed up the stairway and began to search the buildings in the vicinity. Every nook, dark corner, out-house, cellar and other possible place of concealment received due attention, and even the roofs of adjoining buildings were reconnoitered, but to no purpose. Just as the gray light of day dawn began to glimmer faintly in the east, those seven men came out of the alley to the street at the place where Snoozer and Barry had alighted from the carriage, and the leader of the party remarked as he put out the light in his dark lantern, "It's no go, men, Barry has escaped clear enough, and you must have been mistaken about seeing him, Burke. We'll go to the station now," and they marched away over the bridge.

For more than an hour after the police officers had left the cellar, Charles Barry lay perfectly still in his hiding place. He scarcely breathed, and he quivered as one with an ague, while great beads of cold perspiration stood on his face. He could hear the tramp of feet in adjacent courts and alleys. He could hear the low words of consultation and command, and knew that his pursuers were still in the vicinity. He muttered curses, shook his clenched fist, laughed scornfully, and hissed between his closed teeth, "you are off the track, bloodhounds of the law, miserable hirelings, you are outwitted for once, and your game is gone." Then he relapsed again into silence, and a languid numbness stole over him, a drowsiness against which he had not will or power to contend, and finally he sank into deep slumber.

And so the hours went by, until the great bells of the city chimed four, when suddenly he felt a sharp pain in his right leg just below the knee, and another in his left leg, and as consciousness returned he felt something crawling over him, could hear squeaking noises, and something soft brushed quickly over his face. A shudder of horror passed over him. He reached out his hands, pushed the barrel away, grasped the wall on either side and attempted to crawl out into the cellar. What, could he not do it? Had his strength failed him, and the poisonous atmosphere of cellar and sewer sapped his vitality? His limbs were stiff and numb, and he was cold and faint. Again he tried to drag himself out, and again, and yet again, clutching the wall with his hands and straining every cord and muscle. His body moved a little and a little more, and still a trifle, as he struggled, but his little

remaining strength was fast failing. The squeaking noises continued, sharp and fierce, and he could hear the snapping together of keen teeth in the sewer behind him, and in the cellar even close to his face.

He was attacked by an army of wharf rats!

They had tasted his blood and were tearing his flesh. From the sewer behind him they crawled over his body in countless numbers, fighting each other for his blood, tearing his clothes, and driving their keen teeth into his body, while from the cellar they dashed into his face and gnawed his hands.

“Oh God!” he moaned, “this is horrible, must I be literally devoured piece-meal?” He kicked with his feet, fought with his hands, struggled desperately to free himself, wailed, cursed and prayed. Up, up, up, ah!—he rolled out on the cellar floor, sprang to his feet, crushed the old barrel, grasped a stave, and began to strike with it on the ground around him. The faint light of day dawn came down the stairway, and he could see the vast army of rats rushing along the floor, pouring from every hole and crack, and from the sewer pipe. A moment only did he succeed in keeping them off, and then they made a sudden dash from every quarter, and he felt them biting his feet and legs and creeping up his body. It was horrible. He could endure it no longer; the torture was beyond human strength or patience to endure, and death would speedily ensue if he remained. He was no match for his foes; they thronged around and over him in countless numbers—a very army invincible. Back, back, toward the entrance he retreated, fighting desperately with hands and feet, clutching the rats away from his throat and dashing them down on the floor, but they

swarmed fiercer and faster, screaming struggling, fighting for his blood. Gradually his strength gave away, and finally, with an agonizing moan, he sank down just as a tree falls before a tornado. At that instant a shadow darkened the doorway, he heard a savage growl, a rushing sound, and, as he looked up through the increasing light, he saw his dog, a fierce Scotch terrier, dash down the stairway. Immediately a fierce conflict ensued, and the noble dog made terrible havoc among his foes. Rats literally swarmed around and over him, buried their sharp teeth in his flesh, and trumpeted forth their shrill battle-cry; but, quick as thought, he seized one after another in his vice-like jaws, crushed, and tossed them aside, until around him heaps of his slain enemies began to loom up in the growing daylight, and the floor presented the appearance of a battle-field in miniature. Barry had only fallen to his knees, and with the stave still firmly grasped in his right hand continued to fight. He had crawled up beside the wall, and they could only attack him in front. The shrewd little animals, seeing the fearful havoc which their giant enemy made among them, at every charge of their line, finally became more cautious, and advanced rather timidly over the bodies of their slain companions. At length a gray old general sounded a retreat, and the shrill scream passed along the line, and was caught up and passed down to the reserve forces in the sewer pipe, and was echoed by their sentinels in the holes and crevices of the old building, even up to the room which had long been occupied by Leo Cassell.

One more brave charge by the noble dog, a few more vigorous blows by Barry, and the enemy were

routed and in full retreat. Another charge, and they were driven back into their dens, and the battle was ended.

With a deep-drawn sigh of relief, Barry struggled feebly to his feet, ascended the cellar stairs followed by his brave, faithful hero dog, closed the cellar door softly and sank down upon it exhausted, and bleeding profusely from many wounds. The faint shadow of retreating night still lingered in the air and the eastern sky was all aglow with golden and purple light thrown forward by advancing day as earth shrank from the grasp of cold darkness and joyfully glided to the embrace of the sun.

Charles Barry lay there on the cellar door, bleeding, panting, moaning and muttering curses, while his faithful dog sat on the ground near, looking wistfully, questioningly up into his face. "Curses on my fate," he muttered savagely, striking his clenched hand on the cellar door. "Curses on my fate, hunted down like a wild beast, spurned even by the vermin, and so vile have I become that even the light of day seems to shrink away, leaving me in perpetual shadow. Oh God, how low I have fallen! From the heights of honor and affluence, I have plunged headlong to the lowest depths of crime and dishonor. One year ago, only one year, aye but it seems an age of night and agony. One year ago I was the peer of any man in this proud city, but now I am spurned and loathed by all human kind, and even the vermin of the sewers have gnawed my flesh and sucked my blood."

He was a horrible ghastly sight. The terrors of the night had shrunken his form and withered his flesh, and the elegantly dressed man who entered that cellar

sewer a few hours before, had come forth into the gray light of day dawn, clad in rags and reeking with sewer filth, a ghastly, loathsome human wreck. His eyes had shrunken back into his head, his cheeks fallen in, the skin of his face was tightly drawn over fleshless bones, and through his thin, drawn lips every tooth in his jaws might have been counted. Blood oozed from his wounds and trickled down the cellar door until at his feet a great red pool gradually formed, and into it his life was fast flowing, while his wicked spirit watched and waited for the coming and summons of the dark angel.

“Oh God,” he moaned, “it is horrible, horrible! An outcast, a criminal, a vile fugitive from justice! Is this indeed the end of all? must I lie here and die like a wounded dog? Is this the end of my life voyage? And am I indeed *stranded*?”

CHAPTER XXV.

THE FICKLE GODDESS SMILES UPON LEO CASSELL.

Leo Cassell had risen early that beautiful morning, not from his bed of hops and old sacks in his miserable quarters in the deserted building on the wharf, but from his soft, easy bed in his spacious and elegant apartment at the Tremont House. First he put on his patent leather boots, which cost eighteen dollars—had been made expressly for him and fitted his foot as smoothly as a kid glove on a plump hand. Now this was a singular way for a *man* to begin to dress—to put on his boots first. We have been informed that ladies usually do so, but men seldom, because of the extreme danger of rending their nether garments in the act of putting them on thereafter. Yet Cassell did so purely from force of habit, and that fact explains the mystery. He had begun to dress just that way every morning for twenty years, and, having no wife to teach him better manners, never stopped to consider the other more reasonable and proper way. His feet went into his boots easily, and he stamped around the floor and pulled at the straps in order to straighten out the wrinkles and settle his feet into them snugly, and then went strolling around in search of something else. First he opened the closet door and dived in among a quantity of clothing hung on hooks in the wall—mumbling the while, “Strange, strange, where in the mischief could I have put them?” Then he came out into the room, leaving the closet door open and a quantity

of clothing, which he had pulled down, heaped upon the floor; went to the bureau, opened each drawer, leaving each just so, after having thoroughly stirred up their contents; went to the bed, pulled off the clothing, shaking each article, vigorously, and depositing the same on the floor, and, finally, in sheer desperation, flopped down on his hands and knees, and peered around under the bed. "There they are," he exclaimed, gleefully, "there they are, by jingo!" and reaching under he drew forth the lost article, his twenty-dollar pair of pants. Grasping them by the waist-band, he balanced himself on one foot, stretched the pants out before him, swung aloft the disengaged foot and plunged it into one leg of the trowsers, and then went hopping around the room in frantic endeavors to force his foot through. "Rip"! went the stitches, "thump—rattle," his heels on the carpet, "hop, hop," whirled Cassell around the room, until finally he paused breathlessly, having accomplished the feat. At that moment a newsboy on the street called out the morning paper, and Cassell, still clinging to the waistband of his pants, hobbled over to the window, threw up the sash, and leaning over the sill, called out to the urchin, "Here, youngster, toss us up one," at the same time dropping a small coin to the pavement. As the newspaper went whirling by him into the room, Cassell lowered the sash, turned around, grasped the pants again by the waistband, raised his other foot, plunged it into the other leg of the pants, and again went hopping around the room, straining every muscle in pulling at the waistband, until at last he sank down in his easy chair, thoroughly exhausted by his violent exercise, but he had succeeded in forcing both feet through the

legs of his pants without splitting the knees. And so in order he put on each article of clothing, until all had been properly arranged on his person, and then he seized his hat, opened the door, passed down the stairs and out on the street.

Yes, that elegantly dressed gentleman walking hurriedly along was indeed Leo Cassell, but no longer an occupant of the miserable room in the deserted building on the wharf, nor did he, as formerly, toil there early and late, or, indeed, at all, to eke out a miserable livelihood. Certainly his condition had improved wonderfully, and to all appearances, the forty years of his life had shrunk to twenty-five, for even the wrinkles on his face had been smoothed down by the kind hand of good fortune.

What fortunate circumstances had raised Leo Cassell from the squalid misery in which he had so long toiled and groveled, patiently, hopefully, persistently maintaining his honor and integrity amid sore trials and temptations. Had the fickle goddess, Fortune, suddenly dashed at his feet a shower of gold, and had he only to reach out his hands and gather his own? Yes, those were the plain facts. After Jimmie's death, Cassell was Ralph Skinner's only heir, and through Judge Dudley's kind assistance, Skinner's entire estate passed quietly into his possession. Therefore, what wonder if Cassell was spruce and spry, and if the light of his eyes had changed from the sad to the gay, if his feet kept time to the musical chime of the tune, "Drive dull care away?" Yes, he was happy, for grim want had vanished before the smiles and winsome glances of radiant, bright-eyed, jewel-handed Fortune. He had been tried in the fire and found pure, weighed in the

scales and found true, and the goddess had opened to him the portals of a new existence.

"Yes, I must get those letters this morning," he said, as he hurried along the streets, "I must find them if possible. No great consequence to be sure, but I don't care to have her letters laying around loosely, for anything which her hands have touched is sacred, bless her. I think the letters are in the old box where I kept my—well the rags I called shirts, and that dull saw I called a razor," and he passed his hand over the scars on his face which that tool had inflicted.

Ten minutes later he crossed the bridge and turned into an alley, passed along it half a square and then turned into a narrow passage-way between tall buildings. It was the short route to the rear stairs of the old building in which he had so long lived utterly alone save the rats, between whom and Cassell a real friendship existed, for the rats had learned to like the lone occupant of the lonely room, and he, good soul, never invaded their rights in the least. They ran over him while he slept, but never bit him; they played around his feet while he worked, and danced to the merry tunes he whistled, and so Cassell and the rats were indeed a happy and harmonious family.

As he passed along down the narrow passage-way and turned a sharp angle of the building, he was suddenly confronted by a man clad in rags and covered with mud and ashes, whose face and hands were wounded and bleeding, and Cassell felt the cold point of a pistol barrel pressed against his forehead, and a husky voice hiss the words, "*Die! miserable dog!*" Cassell stood perfectly still and looked wonderingly on the white face before him, a face that was both familiar and

strange. He had seen it somewhere, some time—where or when, he could not recall, and he had heard that voice, but wonderful changes had taken place in both. As he glanced along the bright pistol barrel, he saw that the weapon was not cocked, and even smiled as he observed the nervous forefinger tugging at the trigger. At that instant also he recognized the man, and, reaching up, grasped the weapon and wrung it from his hand. However, ere he could anticipate the movement, the man sprang backward, drew another pistol from his belt, cocked and leveled it at Cassell's head. "I've got you now," hissed Barry, as his forefinger tremblingly reached for the trigger; "I've got you now, and I'll give your vile body to the worms and your soul to —" "Just wait a moment, if you please," interrupted Cassell, smiling and folding his arms. "Just wait a minute or two while I figure the distance I shall have to travel. Let me see, how far is it to the moon?"

Barry's finger retreated to his palm, and a ghastly smile came on his face. Notwithstanding the bitter hatred which rankled in his heart, he could not resist feelings of profound admiration for the man before him, the man who could bravely, calmly, face death and perpetrate a joke, even while the finger of a desperate antagonist trembled toward the hair-trigger of a pistol, pointed at his head. Yes, Barry smiled, chuckled, and finally broke forth in a hollow, awful laugh, a veritable wail of agony.

"Why do you wish to take my life, Barry?" inquired Cassell, soothingly, "and what would it profit you? If you discharge that pistol you become a murderer, and your arrest and punishment will be swift and sure. As it is, even if you should be arrested (which you may

possibly avoid), the extreme penalty for the crime of which you are charged would be imprisonment. Permit me to remove the temptation, Barry," and he reached up and took the pistol from the feeble, quivering hand which held it. "Now, Barry," continued Cassell in a pleasant tone, "I shall be generous. You have nothing to fear from me. True, you are an awful sinner, a fugitive from justice, and, according to the strict requirements of the law, it is plainly my duty to arrest you. But, from your appearance, I judge that you have suffered enough already, and I propose to temper justice with mercy. Barry, it is not impossible for you to reform. You are young, educated and talented, and the way to honor and affluence is broad and open before you. At least, it is not too much to anticipate that you will become what you once were—an honest man."

"Now I will place you where you will be safe from pursuit, will provide for your wants, sacredly preserve the secret of your whereabouts, and at the proper time (of which I must be the judge), will place you beyond the limits of this city a free man, if you will faithfully promise that henceforth you will earnestly strive to reform. Do you promise?"

"Yes, Cassell," replied Barry in a tremulous, husky whisper, "yes, Cassell, in the presence of God I swear."

"I believe you, Barry. I believe you are sincere, and I have confidence in your ability to succeed (in a gentler tone). "It is never too late to mend," he added, encouragingly, "never too late to mend," and he took Barry by the hand and led him up the dark stairway to his old quarters in the upper story of the deserted building.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CUPID'S CONQUEST AT THE PALACE OF THE AVENUE.

A year had passed since the eventful night on which Michael Snoozer had fought his last desperate fight and died with a hiss of defiance on his lips, the night on which Charles Barry had fought a fierce battle with legions of wharf rats in the cellar of the old building in which Leo Cassell had so long lived alone. A year! ah me, what changes are often wrought in human affairs, in one brief twelve-month.

Wonderful moral transformations often occur almost instantaneously. Sometimes persons of very evil tendencies, by God's mercy and the exercise of His power, are, like Saul of Tarsus, brought face to face with the Holy of Holies, and commanded to enter into the vineyard of the Lord and labor there.

So it was with Edward Grube (Foxey no longer), for as he prayed that night by the still form of little Jim, his child, evil departed from him, and that "sweet peace that passeth all understanding" came into his heart and he arose, as the pale light of a new day came in at his window—arose to a new and better life.

Yes, a year had passed, and during that time, Edward Grube had become noted for his zeal in the cause of the Holy Man of Nazareth, and thousands had listened to his matchless eloquence as he stood before them a valiant and powerful advocate of his Lord and Master. Yes he had become a devout Christian, and a strong pillar of the church. The dying prayer of his child as

it trembled from its white lips, "Oh God, have mercy on my poor dear papa and make him good, that we may live together in heaven," was the entering wedge which had opened Edward Grube's heart and permitted a flood of holiness to pour in and wash it clean and pure.

Of course Grube's former dissolute companions scoffed at his wonderful moral reformation, and dubbed him the "praying gambler" and yet those same persons would creep into the daily noon prayer meeting, and in respectful silence listen to the wonderfully eloquent words which flowed from his lips. And so every day at noon, during that year, Edward Grube had knelt there and prayed in the presence of listening multitudes. Among the many who daily attended those meetings, none were more interested than Judge Dudley. He had ever been an earnest Christian and a noble worker for the Lord, but he had taken more interest in those meetings since Grube's conversion, for he had become satisfied of the thoroughness of his conversion and deeply interested in him. During the latter half of the year, Grube had been a frequent and most welcome visitor at the Palace of the Avenue, and a warm earnest friendship had sprung up between him and the inmates thereof.

Yes, a year had glided silently by, moistening those cheeks with tears of grief, lighting up this face with smiles, those eyes with gleams of joy, contorting that brow with agony and leaving its records of joy or woe on every human heart.

A year, and the great bells of the city chimed eight, that beautiful, moonlight night, and wooing perfumed zephyrs sighed among the branches and rustled the

leaves of the trees along the street, as Edward Grube ascended the brood flight of stone steps of the Palace of the Avenue, and rang the door-bell. Was that plain gentleman, dressed in a suit of plain black, standing there with the bright moonlight shining full upon him, was that indeed, the Foxey Grube of a year previous? Where was that heavy diamond cluster ring which he formerly wore on the middle finger of his left hand, and that elegant solitaire pin which used to glitter on his bosom? Gone! gone with his vanity, gone! His hand had barely touched the bell-pull when his summons, as though anticipated, was answered. Did some one expect him? and had somebody been waiting with feverish anxiety and impatience—watching and waiting there in the front parlor behind the half-closed blinds the past half hour? Who opened the door before the sleepy servant could rub open his eyes and stagger to his feet from his chair in the back hall? and who clasped Edward Grube's hand and led him into the dimly lighted parlor, just before that sleepy servant turned the angle of the hall and went shuffling along toward the front door? Who but the beautiful Kate Dudley, *even Kate*.

Since the day of Grube's return from the involuntary voyage on which Snoozer and his confederates had launched him from the bridge, Grube had made no love advances toward Miss Dudley.

On the contrary, he had been very guarded in her presence, even when his heart pulsated wildly, for, although he had become a pure, good man, he was but human—mortal, and as love is of divine origin, did he sin if he yielded somewhat to its sweet pure influences in the presence of that loving, beautiful woman? Howbeit,

he kept his own counsels, and his calm exterior did not betray the yearnings of his heart. A slight flush on cheeks and a sudden lighting up of eyes was all that might have been discovered of the tidal wave of emotion, otherwise he was only a frank, generous friend.

"I am glad you have come, Mr. Grube," said Miss Dudley, as they sat by the front window where the bright moonlight streamed in upon them. "I am glad you have come, for I have felt quite lonely this evening, and have been sitting here looking out on the street and wondering if wishing would bring you here to-night."

"And you have been sitting here wishing that I might come, watching every approaching form, every flitting shadow, hoping it might be me?"

"And why not?"

"And why?"

"*You* must solve that problem, Edward."

"*Edward?*"

"Why not Edward?"

"Because I have never dared to hope that you would ever learn to address me thus familiarly."

"And why have you never dared to indulge in that hope?"

"Need I say? I can not give you a clear and satisfactory answer, for to do so would be to recall the bitter regrets I feel because of my wretched and sinful life. I can only explain briefly by saying that socially we have been separated by an almost impassable barrier."

She placed her soft, warm hand timidly over his mouth, and, bending toward him, looked steadily, searchingly into his face.

A silence ensued—a profound, eloquent silence, dur-

ing which two spirits in the flesh held sweet communion, and through their mortal windows silent answers flashed replies to silent questions.

As they sat there in the moonlight, holding silent converse, her mind, like an open book, was before him, and he read her thoughts. She was thinking of his regeneration and of his new and noble life, and that thereby he had become her equal, and it was a blissful realization to him.

"And if we are now equal, Kate, why may we not become one?" was his audible response.

A crimson flush came upon her face, and she sat still and silent, looking upward at the fleecy clouds drifting across the milky-way. It was a talking silence as the soft light of modest Luna shone on their upturned faces. It was a silence of vibrating, thrilling force, which swept along the harp-strings of two souls set to the same sweet music.

She moved her hand, and he felt a shock as though he had grasped the wires of an electric battery and she had turned the wheel. He put out his hand toward her and it trembled. She placed her hand in his, and it was soft and warm and trembled also.

"Kate, will you be my wife?" he said.

"Yes, Edward, loving and true."

"God bless you, darling."

"He is blessing me now."

And modest Luna veiled her face with a fleecy cloud, and Zephyr stopped his ears and ceased to sigh.

Just here the pen in its impatience cuts through the paper, makes a blot, and, bending up its sharp prongs, says to the writer, "Beware, friend, lest we spoil the dish with too much spice. I am weary, let us rest."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CUPID GAINS ANOTHER VICTORY.

“And why not? I say, Rudolph, why not? But I’m a queer body, have become so used to losses and crosses, ups and downs (more downs than ups), starvation and disappointment, that I almost feel guilty in accepting the wealth and happiness so suddenly given to me by THE KIND FATHER OF ALL. I feel as though I am taking that which does not by right belong to me, and yet, when I go over the whole ground, I see that the property is indeed mine, and yet it seems so singular that I should possess anything except in imagination. But that is nothing here or there. Grace, God bless the darling, is good, pure, true and beautiful, and will make somebody a charming wife. Upon my word, I believe I know of a party who would make any possible sacrifice to win her and—and I say, why not, Rudolph, everything is just pleasant, comfortable, plenty of this world’s goods, couldn’t spend the interest, to say nothing of the principal. Then why not, Rudolph? but, my friend, do you think she would be willing to take me for better or for worse, eh?”

“Leo, you are the most consummate simpleton I ever knew. Quite complimentary, I confess, but true. You are as verdant as a country lad, and possess very little self-confidence. Why, Leo, give your wealth to some men, and they would trample down their fellows, stand upon the necks of groaning hundreds and lord it over all with whom they might become associated. In ‘heir

opinion every woman in the city would be dying to become Mrs. Whatnot, and they wouldn't be so simple as to go to a friend with the inquiry, 'do you think she'll take me?' Bah!

"Take, you, Leo? Why bless your soul and body in this and the future world. Of course she'll have you, if you will only screw up sufficient courage to pop. Why, I tell you, Leo, and I never lied to *you* in my life, which I am sure you'll be willing to swear on a stack of Bibles as high as the Custom House. I tell you, my boy, she has *always loved* you. You see, Leo, I have wrestled with this problem, beaten the bush to drive out ideas on the subject, and, from what information I can gather in reference to the matter, I have unanimously arrived at the conclusion which has confirmed in me that belief; 'Straws sometimes show which way the wind blows,' and as I know the lady well, have known her ever since she was knee-high to a duck, a perfect jewel, sweet as a rose and pretty as a full ripe peach, and her mother—halloo! where am I drifting to, Leo? What was my original subject, that is, what was the particular idea which I first attempted to elucidate? Your wine is blasted strong, you know. What was I talking about anyhow?"

"I asked if you really believe that Grace Worsham would even so much as think of marrying such an ungainly and incomprehensible specimen of humanity as Leo Cassell."

"Marry you, Leo? Why, what are you talking about? Are you raving crazy? Marry you? I'll tell you what I'll do, I'll bet any man a new silk hat that, like Widow Brown, when old Broodus popped, she'll say 'yes, dear, and thank ye too.' You just pop and see,

that's my advice. Why, I tell you, Old Modesty, a summer trout never snapped at a fly with one-half the earnestness, aye, the eagerness with which she would accept your proposition to splice."

"But you forget that she also is wealthy now, Mark Barry's estate is all hers, or will be eventually."

"Bah! what difference does that make? Ha-ha-ha! I was thinking of that the other night, and I made Dolly turn her face over to me and I said, 'how funny it is old sweetness,' and then she pinched me because I called her *old*, and threatened to get up and sit in the rocker by the window all night. But I coaxed her, and explained that I used the word '*old*,' not in its literal sense, but as a pet word, a term of endearment, and she concluded to lie still and listen to what I had to say. Let me see—what *did* I say—oh!—oh, yes! Ha-ha-ha! I said to Dolly, 'how awful funny it is that the Skinner and Barry estates, during the past forty years, have been making desperate but ineffectual efforts to consolidate. For forty years, Barry and Skinner, in a metaphorical sense, have had each other by the throat, each trying to gobble up the other's estate. Sharp old coons both, and dead and worm-eaten now, both. But the funny part comes in here. Those two estates have always appeared to be courting, in a double sense, at law, and in love, the former in furtherance of the latter. Metaphorically, Barry's was the girl and Skinner's the boy, and they have always wanted to splice and pull at the same tow-line. 'Now, old sweetness,' said I, to Dolly, and bless your soul, Leo, but she pinched me again for calling her *old*, and said I, 'It's blasted funny that those two young folks, Leo and Grace are heels over head in love

with each other, just doubled up with it, as a touch of cramp colic does to a body.' Now here's the laughing place. She has the Barry estate, he the Skinner estate, and blamed if they aren't bound to get married, and then at last, those loving estates will be spliced and so thoroughly mixed up that nobody will be able to tell one from the other, just as the angels will be puzzled to find out which is which, when Dolly and I apply for admittance up there. Yes, those estates will be spliced at last, for Skinner and Barry have ceased to have any influence whatever in the matter.' Ha-ha-ha! it is a splendid joke, no mistake, ha-ha—! Why don't you laugh?"

Cassell, who was standing by the center-table and looking down on his friend who sat in an easy chair toying with a wine-glass, smiled at Merryfellow's inquiry made in a quizzical tone and manner, and finally laughed heartily as Merryfellow rocked to and fro in his chair, giving vent to his delight in shouts of laughter, while he held his sides with both hands, and tears ran down his face.

They were sitting in Cassell's elegant apartment at the Tremont House. Merryfellow had simply made an informal call on his friend, merely stopped on his way home after business hours, and, as usual, had taken a sip of wine. But, on this occasion, Cassell had mixed in brandy, about half and half with the wine, merely for a joke on Merryfellow and to loosen his tongue, and, having imbibed freely, that gentleman was in exceedingly good humor.

"Come now, Leo," said Merryfellow, rising from his chair and wiping the tears from his face with the back of his hand, "Come now, old fel., I'm going to take you

home with me, and then somewhere else. Dollie and I will put you through a course of training of which you never so much as even dreamed. We'll make a man of you, tie you up, tuck you in snugly, and if you ever cease to bless this day, I shall begin to suspect that you are not the man I have always believed you to be. Ha-ha-ha! Fun ahead, boys; real, genuine, rollicking, wild fun, with a strong spicing of earnestness in it and a world of happiness as the sequel. Eh? Old chum, God bless you, I say. Ha-ha-ha! I'll take you under my wing now; you're my prisoner for an hour, and when I leave you to the *tender mercies* of another—well, what's the use to anticipate? And I see you do not understand me. Well enough, perhaps, that you don't, else you might prove troublesome. Come now," and he seized Cassell, lifted him in his arms as though he were a baby, carried him down stairs, lifted him into a carriage, got in himself, closed the door, and then they were whirled away rapidly toward the western portion of the city.

"Well, what do you propose to do with me, Rudolph?" queried Cassell, as he clung to the hand-strap of the carriage to keep from plunging headlong forward, as they were then dashing along at a breakneck speed over a newly-paved street. "What do you propose to do?"

"Propose to do with you, Leo? I'll show you by and by; just curb your impatience and make yourself easy for the present. Ha-ha! I have you in the tightest place, old fel., you were ever in, I'll guarantee. Hallo there!" he shouted to the driver, "Haul up at No. 72 on next square!" "Aye, aye, sir," was the reply, as the carriage wheels dashed down into a gutter

crossing and bounded violently over the bridge stones, "Aye, aye, sir!" and Merryfellow, who had let go the hand-strap, plunged head foremost to the front of the carriage and doubled up backward on the floor.

"Here you are, Mr. Merryfellow," called out the driver, as he drew rein close to the pavement, before a very handsome dwelling. "Here ye are, sir." "All right, my boy," sputtered Rudolph, as he arose from the floor of the carriage and scrambled to the pavement. "And now, look you here, Ben, get down off that seat and guard this prisoner. This chap in here I've arrested for false pretenses, and if you let him escape I'll break your back—do you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you *heed*!"

"Rather," was the laughing reply.

"Well, you'd better," muttered Merryfellow, threateningly, as he stumbled along the paved walk, up the broad flight of stone steps and rang the door-bell.

His summons was answered by a very fleshy, rosy-faced, bald-headed, old gentleman in dressing gown and slippers.

"Why—why, I declare, good evening, Mr. Merryfellow," were the words uttered with precise pronunciation, which greeted Rudolph as the door opened. "How do you do, Mr. Merryfellow?"

"Very well, Mr. Boggs, quite well, thank you. I've come to gobble you up, sir, just as you are. Do you see that carriage? Well, I've a chap in there, whom I've just arrested for false pretenses. He's a hard customer, Mr. Boggs, a desperate character, sir, and I want you to lend a hand to help put him where by right he belongs."

"Really—really, Mr. Merryfellow, I—I am very much engaged at present," replied the gentleman. "I—I couldn't be of much service to you, anyhow, I would advise you to find a police officer, th—that would be the best plan, Mr. Merryfellow," and as he stammered out the words, hysterically, Mr. Boggs' face became white and crimson, alternately.

"You won't go, then?" queried Merryfellow, abruptly.

"Really, I could not; very sorry, but very busily engaged—Saturday, you know, and my notes not yet completed. I—oh—ah—hump! Mercy, how warm," and he mopped the perspiration from his face with a very large handkerchief, which he drew from the breast pocket of his dressing-gown. "Ah! gracious goodness, what on earth—oh!"

Merryfellow had seized the reverend gentleman, lifted him in his arms as he would have done a child, hurried down the paved walk, kicked open the front gate, and with his burden still in his arms, sprang into the carriage, closed the door and shouted to the driver, who had climbed to his seat, "Turn west on the next street, Ben, and stop at 417. Let 'em out now, you beggar, we don't want to be all night on the way."

"Aye, aye, sir," came the reply, as the whip cracked and the horses sprang forward with such violence as to lift the carriage wheels clear of the pavement, throwing the reverend gentleman forward into Merryfellow's arms.

"Set 'em up again, all down but nine," shouted Merryfellow, as he deposited Mr. Boggs on the front seat. "Set 'em up, I say! Ha—ha—ha! aren't this jolly?"

The reverend gentleman protested vehemently

against being thus rudely torn from the bosom of his family, and away from his Bible and sermon, expostulated pathetically to the hair-brained Merryfellow, and with a deep-drawn sigh, ended with: "It is all well enough to frolic occasionally—it is well enough, I say, but there is a proper time for everything, sir, a proper time, Mr. Merryfellow, ahem!"

Cassell added his voice in vigorous English, rated Merryfellow soundly, and made numerous demands, ending with, "What crazy freak have you taken now? In the name of common sense and decency, let me entreat you to pause and consider what you are doing. I've half a mind to get angry; I declare, such conduct is perfectly outrageous. I don't understand your movements at all, and I protest against such nonsensical proceedings."

Merryfellow was deaf to the complaints of his prisoners, and in order to drown their voices, laughed, whistled and scolded at the driver incessantly.

"Here you are, Mr. Merryfellow," shouted Ben, from his place on the box, as the carriage suddenly stopped by the pavement. "Here you are, sir." "Get down, you rascal," shouted Merryfellow in reply, and as the driver complied and opened the carriage door, Rudolph sprang out, grasped his arm and said, hastily, "Ben, I have two of 'em in there now, and I'm going to fetch another. Am snapping 'em up all around, you see, ha-ha! Now look you here, Ben," continued Merryfellow, giving the driver a vigorous shake. "Mind what I tell you now. If you let those chaps get away from you, I'll break your back, and scalp you in the bargain, do you hear? Mind now, watch 'em close, for they're desperate characters."

Having thus delivered his injunctions and commands with mock earnestness of manner and tone, accompanied by sundry nods and winks, Merryfellow hurried through the front gate and up the steps of his own home. As he reached out his hand to grasp the knob, the door suddenly opened and Mrs. Merryfellow stood before him, smiling a joyous welcome. Just so she had always welcomed him home since the twain became one in flesh and spirit, and in like manner he had always in return folded her in his arms and kissed her. As she fluttered from his grasp, with scarlet face and tingling nerves, as usual, he said, hastily, "Come, Dollie dear, put on your hat and wrappings, I want you to go with me. Come, be quick. I'm in an awful hurry. Do be quick," he added, impatiently, as she hesitated, "I want you right away."

"But, Rudolph, dear," she expostulated, "what do you want of me? Where will you go? What will become of baby? and tea is all ready, and—oh me! Dolphy dear—Dolphy! I say, oh!" He had lifted her in his arms, and though she laughed and struggled to escape his grasp, rushed down the front steps, through the gate, over the pavement, into the carriage and closed the door. Then he put his head out of the carriage window, gave some hasty directions to the driver, and immediately the whip cracked, the horses sprang forward and they were whirled away over the uneven pavement at break-neck speed.

Now, Mrs. Merryfellow was one of the sweetest and purest lambs of Mr. Boggs' spiritual flock, and her astonishment at beholding, there in the carriage in such untidy and undress apparel, her beloved pastor, was indeed boundless. For several minutes she was

utterly speechless, and when words came to her relief, ideas failed to respond, and after lisping a few disconnected sentences, she cuddled down by her husband and became silent. But Mr. Boggs still expostulated and begged piteously to be released and returned to the sorrowing bosom of his family, and his unfinished sermon, while Cassell grumbled and importuned Merryfellow with questions as to his designs, the while evidently laboring under severe nervous excitement. "What *do* you intend to do, Rudolph? I pray you stop and reflect just one moment. For goodness sake my friend, don't attempt anything rash; you know you are not yourself now—blast that wine and brandy. I'll never do it again—no, I *never* will. I—oh dear me—dear me!" and so the confusion and strife continued until the carriage drew up before an elegant mansion, and the driver called out, "Here you are Mr. Merryfellow, sir, here you are."

There was another carriage before the mansion, evidently having just arrived, as it moved forward to allow the Merryfellow party to alight. Doubtless other callers had arrived, and were at that moment being entertained in the front parlor which was brilliantly illuminated, and from whence, through the polished plate glass windows, floods of soft gaslight swept down over the pavement half across the street.

Merryfellow took all in at a glance as he stepped out on the pavement, paused irresolutely, and gazed up into the marble vestibule. But his indecision was merely momentarily, and turning to his party in the carriage said, "Now, Dolly dear, and gentlemen, if you will alight and enter this mansion I will esteem such act an especial personal favor. Permit me, Dollie," and

he put out his hand to his little wife, who sat looking wistfully out at the carriage door. "Permit me, Dollie," he repeated, as she glanced beseechingly into his face and hesitated.

"Oh, Rudolph dear, I can't go in there as I am. What *do* you intend to do?" and she drew back to the opposite side of the carriage, and grasped the side strap. Mr. Boggs protested vehemently, Mr. Cassell added the weight of his objections in a weak, quivering tone, and the rebellion became open and vigorous.

"Ben," said Merryfellow, addressing the driver, "move up a little and hitch your team, I need your muscle. Now Ben," continued Rudolph, when the driver had complied and stood ready to execute any commands. "Now, my boy, snatch those two chaps out of that carriage if they won't come voluntarily; no fooling now; do as I tell you," and Merryfellow reached into the carriage and took his refractory little wife in his arms, lifted her from the carriage, and put her down on the pavement, still holding her by the hand. "Now, gentlemen," said the driver firmly, but respectfully, "will you alight, or will I be compelled to assist you?" "Thank you, thank you," responded Mr. Boggs, as he crept from the carriage, "thank you, no assistance required." "Much obliged, but I can get out without help," said Cassell, as he meekly followed the reverend gentleman. "Keep a sharp watch or they'll get away from you Ben," commanded Merryfellow, as he opened the gate. "Look sharp, I say." "Aye, aye, sir," was the confident response, and then the party ascended the broad flight of stonesteps Mr. and Mrs. Merryfellow leading, the two gentlemen meekly following, and the stalwart driver last, acting

as rear guard, and holding up the butt end of his whip menacingly. Merryfellow rang the bell violently, and as the door opened, dashed by the astonished servant, rushed into the parlor leading Mrs. Merryfellow by the hand, and followed by Messrs. Boggs and Cassell.

As they entered, Grace Worsham came quickly forward with a cordial welcome. Of course, she was very much astonished by their very odd appearance, particularly the decidedly undress apparel of the Reverend Mr. Boggs. She cast a quick questioning glance at Mrs. Merryfellow, and, in return, received only a blank, confused stare, turned to Cassell with the same silent interrogation—not the least explanation there, and then she glanced sharply at Merryfellow, who advanced, took her hand in his and said, in a thick voice which betrayed his condition, “My dear Miss Grace, I knew you when you were a baby. I used to hang around you when you were but a little chick and wore bibs, used to swing you when you were a trifle older, and had half a mind to make love to you when you put on long dresses. But, Dolly, God bless her, stepped in and spoiled that fun, and we, you and I, have each been going our own happy ways. Now, my little bird, I am old enough to be your papa, and having, as Dollie knows, always been your sincere friend, I can talk to you, as that young chap over there (pointing to Cassell) could not do, probably, without incurring your displeasure. Ye-e-s,” he drawled, pressing her hand kindly, “ye-e-s. Well, as Dolly knows, I have always taken a deep interest in your welfare, and now I want to make you perfectly happy. Grace, I have brought you a husband, here he is,” and Merryfellow reached back, grasped Cassell by the shoulder

and drew him forward. That gentleman stammered confusedly, blushed, hung his head like a bashful schoolboy and twirled his thumbs, while Grace stood blushing, and trembling like a frightened fawn.

A silence ensued, painful, oppressive, but fortunately brief, and then Cassell, with quick, nervous movements, advanced, grasped Grace Worsham's hand and said, "This is no affair of mine—or at least has not been planned, or executed by me, voluntarily, for, until this moment, I have not been aware of the precise intentions of my friend, Merryfellow. But as it has gone thus far, I do not see how I can do better than attempt to consummate what was intended by our noble, but at present, slightly muddled friend. Grace, I love you, and if you reciprocate and are willing to take me just as I am, and *now*, here is my hand, my heart you have already." Her mother stood by her side, and as Grace glanced timidly, questioningly up into her face, the old lady turned to Cassell, whose beseeching look she could not resist, and, turning to her daughter with a smile, she nodded assent. Then Grace Worsham turned to Cassell and said in a clear, distinct voice, "Leo, I love you dearly, and will be your wife."

"Now?" queried Cassell, eagerly.

"Now!" she answered, smiling through tears of joy.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Merryfellow, as he whirled around the room swinging his hat above his head, "Hurrah! that is business all over!"

Standing a little aside from the main group were two persons—a gentleman and lady, who had been silent and deeply interested spectators of that informal yet earnest plighting of troth. They conversed in whispers not audible to the others, and in questioning

glances and replies, such as only lovers can understand or appreciate. They had evidently formed new determinations there and then, and only awaited the opportunity to announce the same to the company. Therefore, when Merryfellow had sufficiently ventilated his enthusiasm, and under the soothing influences of little Dollie's caresses and words of caution reduced to lamb-like submission and tractability, Edward Grube stepped forward, leading Kate Dudley by the hand, and said, "Friends, as this pleasant affair has progressed so far, Kate and I beg to announce that in accordance with previous intentions, not clearly defined as to time, we have settled the doubtful part of the vexed question, even while Grace and Leo were arriving at their understanding. We have concluded that if they can so confidently enter upon the responsibilities and hazards involved in the holy relations, which must ever hereafter exist between them, certainly we can do the same, and, therefore, you are invited to attend, at the residence of Judge Dudley, next Wednesday evening, a ceremony in which we 'twain will be made one flesh.' In spirit we are one already."

"Hurrah! hurrah! shouted Merryfellow, breaking away from the grasp of his little wife. "Hurrah," he shouted again and again, swinging his hat above his head and endeavoring to perform a clog dance. "Haha! that's good—splendid, but say, fellows and girls—can't somebody else get married—bless my soul there is Mrs. Worsham and Mr. Boggs, what do you say folkses, can't we make that arrangement just to make a complete job of it, and not leave anybody with 'no one to love?' Being reminded by little Dollie, in whispers, that Mr. Boggs' wife and nine small children

stood boldly and frowningly in the way of such accommodation, Merryfellow relinquished the project at once, and, grasping the reverend gentleman by the arm and clinging to him for support, leaned over and whispered in his ear, "Now Mr. Boggs, do your duty like a man, and tie the knot double quick, or off goes your head, down close to your toes."

"Are you ready?" queried Mr. Boggs, tremulously, addressing Cassell and Grace Worsham, and receiving an affirmative reply, Mr. Boggs bowed very low, cleared his throat, and the ceremony began, while Merryfellow continued to cling to his shoulder, swaying to and fro, whispering to Mr. Boggs sundry warnings, such as, "Don't leave out anything, put in that she must *obey*—an important matter, you know; I'm here to see this done right, and I won't have any dodging around to accommodate strong-minded women. Not that I think Grace would ever be one of that sort, but it's well enough to do the business in a business-like manner, and then it's safe anyhow, so tie 'em tight, old fel.; tie 'em tight or I'll break your back."

Finally the last solemn words were spoken, and Grace Worsham had become the wife of Leo Cassell. Grace Cassell was beautiful as she stood there receiving the congratulations of the company, and Cassell, as he accepted, awkwardly enough, the congratulations showered upon him, really appeared taller, larger and younger than when he entered that room as Merryfellow's prisoner. True, he still remained a prisoner, but not to Merryfellow, for love had forged new fetters, and a certain Mrs. Cassell held the key. However, he seemed to take kindly to his new condition, for he kissed his new wife before Mr. Boggs, who had pre

pared to drive in and forestall him, could execute his maneuver, putting the laugh on the pastor, most decidedly. As the last accents fell from Mr. Boggs' lips, Merryfellow dashed his beaver hat up against the ceiling, and as it came down, gave it a kick, sending his foot through the crown and rendering it a total wreck; clapped his hands; cut the pigeon wing, performed the Boston Dip and the Giraffe Waddle, kissed all the ladies, hugged all the gentlemen, even the servant at the door, and finally found his little wife, to whom he said, as he took her up in his arms, "Bl-bless your zweet, little life; durned if ye aren't zweeter an gooder 'an all on 'em put in a bunch, bless your zweet, little life."

The author's pen has again become refractory, absolutely refusing to go into more minute details, on the ground that Leo and Grace, being thoroughly Casselled, ought certainly be permitted to manage their domestic affairs in their own way, subject only to the ten, or rather the *eleven* commandments, presuming that they would in any event obey the eleventh, during their honeymoon at least. Yielding that point (reluctantly, however) to the pen, the author would fain describe the wedding which occurred at the Palace of the Avenue, but here again the pen enters a protest, and concludes a lengthy argument with these words: "Let me give you some wholesome advice, friend of the quill, which, if you will wisely heed, may save you some sharp, stinging criticisms. The epoch of maudlin, sickening sentiment is ended. We, the muses, have endured those of painting, sculpture, poetry and romance, all of which, as specialties, were well enough in their times, pandering to the peculiar tastes of their ages, but successively they have given place to new orders, and one

might as well attempt to infuse life into an Egyptian mummy as to revive the tastes or usages of the dead past. However, we have boiled them all down, and reduced them to a solid, amalgamated substance, which we shave off and deal out in quantities to suit. The fact is, to use a mining parlance, everything has reached 'bed rock,' and nobody in this age will toy with shadows. Facts! facts! friend quill-driver, deal only with solid, hard facts! Illustrate them with fiction if you choose, for a little varnish, properly applied will render an old piece of furniture quite presentable, and likewise rough, hard truths may be rounded, polished and adorned by the application of a little harmless fiction. But my friend, the advice of the old preacher to the young and flowery graduate was good, and I will repeat it here for your benefit: 'Stick to your text, young man; stick to your text.' The pen has the case, and the author, making a virtue of necessity, gracefully subsides, leaving the reader, who is perfectly familiar with the manner in which all weddings in high life are conducted, to imagine what the pen absolutely refuses to chronicle, merely announcing, with consent of the pen, and as a substantial fact, that Edward Grube and Kate Dudley were married and left free to bill and coo, and make love as their mutual inclinations might prompt. The wedding occurred according to announcement, on that beautiful Wednesday evening in June, and the following morning Mr. and Mrs. Grube, Mr. and Mrs. Cassell, Mr. and Mrs. Merryfellow, Judge Dudley and Mrs. Worsham, and a select party of friends boarded a steam yacht especially chartered for the purpose, and sailed away for a season tour of the beautiful northern lake region.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONCLUSION.

In the twilight of a cold and dreary November evening, a weary tramp, clad in worn and tattered garments, plodded slowly along a broad highway toward a certain city. His left hand grasped a small stick which rested on his left shoulder, and fastened to the stick was a small bundle of clothing thus suspended over his back. In his right hand he held a long staff of hickory, knotted, gnarled and twisted, as though during growth it had become dissatisfied, and, in stubborn opposition to the course of nature, had twisted itself into that ridiculous shape, died and remained just so. The staff was long, reaching above his head, was heavy and evidently an incumbrance to its owner. The upper end was composed of three small, limber and crooked stems, branching out from the main trunk at a knot which stood on a line with the man's face when the staff stood upright before him. That knot was a remarkable natural curiosity, inasmuch as it bore a striking resemblance to a human head and face. The eyes, nose, mouth, chin, neck and even ears were there, and yet that knot grew just so, and the gray, feathery moss, which had gathered on it during growth, still clung to its worn and polished surface.

Wearily he toiled up a long slope, over the loose stones with which the highway had been freshly strewn, limped painfully, and muttered alternately

prayers and oaths, as the sharp edges of the stones bruised and cut his feet through the holes in his old worn shoes.

Rain had been falling steadily since early dawn, had driven him forth from his bed by a friendly haystack in a field, and during that day the wretched wanderer, foot-sore, weary and hungry, had traveled many weary miles over a rough and lonely way. He was weak for want of food, weak from physical exhaustion by toil, and as he plodded along, gazed wistfully toward the summit, but faintly visible through the reluctant, lingering twilight. Tramp, tramp, tramp! Up, upward! until at last he stood upon the summit, and beheld the glimmering lights of the great city apparently but a short distance beyond.

"How far, Witch-o-watch-o-we-chin?" he said in a hoarse, feeble voice, striking the foot of his staff on the ground. "How far?" and he brought the knot-head before him, and gazed on it questioningly and in silence a few moments, when a strong gust of wind swept by and bent the three slim prongs above the knot-head, toward the south.

"Ha! you won't talk to-night, eh? and you motion me to walk that way and inquire at yonder house? Out on ye, Witch-o watch-o-we-chin. you are very unkind. Ah! what is that there? Aha, my good fellow, now I understand you," and patting the knot-head affectionately with his hand, he walked over to a guide-post which stood on the opposite side of the highway but a short distance beyond where another road crossed diagonally.

The guide-post was a strong cross, painted white,

and planted firmly in the ground, and he paused before it, gazing up at the black letters which were but faintly visible in the gathering darkness. The wind flapped the brim of his old tattered wool hat, and played with the rags and loose patches of his garments. He shivered and rubbed his thin, shriveled, bony hands, and his teeth knocked together, and the wrinkles of his thin, yellow face rippled over its surface, and his deep-set eyes flashed and sparkled as only a maniac's may.

"Five miles, five miles," he muttered, dreamily. "Five miles? Why everything grows—even distance. Twenty, ah, yes, twenty years ago, has it been twenty? Well, no matter, once it was but three miles from the top of this hill to the court-house yonder, but now it is five. Ah, that proves it; that proves that the world grows just like an apple, and, that eventually, it will fill all space, grind the sun, moon and stars to powder, gather them to itself to increase its own bulk, and then, like a grindstone, it will rub against, and wear away the sky, until finally it will break through and go whirling up into heaven. Then will come the resurrection and the day of judgment." Then he turned and walked down the hill toward the city, muttering, "Five miles, five miles, how the world grows, grows, grows! Twenty years—three miles have become five in twenty years!" At length he came to a railway track over which the highway passed, and then he again paused, leaned against a telegraph pole, looked up and down the track, and said, "Now here's another accursed invention of man. Not content to walk upon the earth as nature designed him to do, he must invent a power to drag him along on iron rails while he sits in a warm

house gazing pensively out the window, at the frozen earth and cloudless sky. I saw *him* at the station, away back yonder, over those hills, saw him to-day. He'll go to the city, thought I, he'll go to the city to-night on the cars, one thought and then another went creeping through my mind, as he walked to and fro on the platform of that lone station house, and how the old hate came up and boiled and surged through my heart, as I beheld him in broadcloth and jewels, bought with other people's money—*my money*—while I sat there cold, wet and hungry. What a good opportunity, thought I, to put him out of the way; nobody would ever know who did the work, and I could crush his skull at a single blow with witch-o-watch-o-we-chins' foot. I was about to strike him once, when he came so near me that I could have touched him with my hand, but at that instant a carriage drove up, into which he got, and was whirled rapidly away. Oh, I was so angry with myself to think that I had permitted so good an opportunity to escape, to pass unimproved, but as I sat there thinking, viewing the subject in all its lights and shades, I concluded that perhaps it was well enough that circumstances had permitted him to escape my vengeance for the time, because, to kill him at a single blow, would be to deal out to him an easy death, and that is no part of my plan. And so I trudged along, and here I am within five miles of the city—within half a mile of the bridge, and the train about due. I must hurry, hurry on," and he walked away down the railway track, toward the city.

He stumbled along over the ties, bruised his foot on the sharp stones between them, and muttered savagely, "Cassell will be on the train, curse him, miserable dog,

sporting on other people's money—*my money*—while I am freezing, starving. An angel, or devil came and told me last night that I would have him in my power to-day. Ha-ha! Won't I crush him!"

Finally, he came to a long, high trestle-work which spanned a deep chasm, and leaning against the railing of the bridge, he brought the staff before him, and striking the butt end on the ground, exclaimed, "Well witch-o-watch-o-we-chin, what shall the God of the universe do now? What, you won't talk? You, my chief counselor." As he stood gazing questioningly on the knot-head, a strong gust of wind swept up from the chasm and he reeled backward and would have fallen over the cliff but clung to the railing of the bridge, and shouted as he saw the slim prongs above the knot-head bend downward. "Ha-ha-ha!—Witch-o-watch-o-we-chin, you are wise—wise! I understand you my good, my *only* friend, I understand you, Ha! what is that?" and he cast a wild, quick glance over his shoulder, down the track in the direction he had come. The wind had risen to a gale and swept from the north in strong gusts with dashes of rain which beat furiously upon him as he stood and listened. What did he hear? Roll, roll, rumble, rumble! rattlebang, rattlebang! It was the sound of a railway train thundering along the track toward the city. "Ha!" he exclaimed, angrily, as he saw the first flash of the headlight far down the track, "ha-ha-ha! he can not escape me now." Then he carefully put down his staff, wrenched several large stones from the embankment near, rolled them one by one, to the track and piled them between the ties and on the iron until a great heap of stones had been placed just over the abutment of the first span of the bridge.

Then he raised his staff from the ground, grasped it firmly with both hands, stepped back a few paces on the bridge, and took position in the center of the track. His hat had fallen off, and the wind had blown it down into the chasm, and his long hair floated out behind him, flapping like a flag in the wind. The tatters of his thin garments waved like many arms pointing and beckoning, while he stood grim and motionless, glaring defiance at the advancing train. It was the Lightning Express, a train for which all others gave way, and it was well named, for it ran at a high rate of speed. Roll, roll, rattlebang! rattlebang! puff, puff, and the first gleams of the headlight shone around that ghostly object standing on the bridge behind the heap of stones, as the engine reached the summit and came dashing down the grade.

“Ha-ha-ha!” he laughed, as he leaned upon his staff, wagged his head derisively and shook his slim fore-finger menacingly toward the train. “Ha-ha-ha!” and his wild mocking laugh floated away on the wind and came back in hoarse echoes from the awful depths of the chasm. Roll, roll! rumble, rumble! rattlebang, rattlebang! brighter and brighter grew the light around him, as the train came thundering down the grade.

On, on! only a quarter of a mile to the bridge. On, on, only four hundred yards, ah! a shrill whistle for down brakes, another, and then another, the last like a human wail of despair, ah! too late, too late! crash! and the engine strikes the obstruction, leaps upward, trembles on the verge and then plunges forward into the dark gulch.

Down, down—crash! and the engine had fallen on

the rocks below. Crash! and a car had fallen upon it, and broken into fragments. Crash! crash! crash! and the whole train had made the awful leap, burying a hundred human beings in its ruins.

As the engine came in contact with the obstruction, the ghostly figure standing on the bridge raised his staff, swung it above his head, and aimed a blow at the headlight, but fell far short of the mark, and he reeled backward, slipped between the ties, and dropped downward into the gulch, striking the ground at the base of a stone pier, forty feet below.

He struck squarely on his feet with terrific force, and plunged headlong forward on his face, in a dead swoon. For several minutes he remained in that position, and then he began to clutch the ground with his hands, and moaned piteously. Finally he struggled to a sitting posture, reached backward and grasped his long staff, which lay near him, and leaning forward on it, gazed wildly down on the wreck at the bottom of the gulch. For the moment he appeared not to realize the awful calamity which had befallen him, so preoccupied was he in contemplating the ruin his hands had wrought, and although he suffered intensely, not a moan escaped him. He heard the awful moans of the wounded, he saw a light spring up in the wreck, and knew that it had caught fire from the engine furnace. He saw the uninjured survivors hurrying around the burning wreck, making desperate efforts to drag forth the wounded, and again he waved the knot-head aloft, and broke forth in a wild, fiendish laugh.

“Ha—ha—ha!” he shouted, “ha—ha—ha!” and the tall cliff across the gulch threw back the sound,

“ha-ah-a-a-a-ah—ah!” He could hear the crackling of the flames, and see the fire licking in among the splintered timbers of the wreck, and the light grow brighter, until the tall cliffs and tree-tops stood boldly out from the darkness. Finally a faintness began to creep over him, and although he leaned upon his staff for support, his hands were weak and unable to sustain the weight of his body, and gradually he sank downward, until he lay at full length on the ground. As he gazed aloft, he saw the broken span of the bridge swaying to and fro in the wind, and he heard a sound louder than the moaning storm, or the groans of the wounded and dying.

Roll, roll, rattlebang, rattlebang—it was another train, rushing down the grade! Nearer and nearer—ah! The shrill scream of the whistle rang out, the car wheels ground along the track, and the engine came to a dead halt, less than ten feet from the broken span of the bridge. Then he heard shouts, and as he gazed aloft, saw human forms creeping down the bridge timbers, heard human voices calling out to him, and a moment later Leo Cassell knelt beside him, and gazed pityingly into his face. With a whispered curse, which died upon his lips, he endeavored to raise his hand to strike the man who knelt beside him, but death thwarted his wicked purpose, for his hand fell nervelessly by his side, as his wicked spirit took its flight.

Yes, he was dead. The light from the burning wreck shone on his haggard, upturned face, revealing the deep furrows which time had never placed there. Disease, dissipation and unbridled passion had done the work, and ten years had converted the proud, erect

form of the young man into the crouching decrepitude of age. He had gone forth from his native city a fugitive from justice, but he had promised the man, through whose magnanimity he had been able to escape the vengeance of violated law, that he would endeavor to become an honest man. He went forth with fresh hopes and noble aspirations, but the seeds of vice were deeply sown in his heart, and, after a brief, feeble struggle against their base promptings, he fell back into the ways of sin, and became a wretched, wandering outlaw. He had wandered through foreign lands, and for his crimes had endured toil and imprisonment as a galley-slave in France. He had been branded, whipped and scarred, barely escaping with his life, but with sullen indifference he had endured all, suffered all—would not die. Finally he had wandered back to his native land, a shattered and *stranded* human soul, and there, in the light of the burning wreck, under the swinging span of the broken bridge, was stretched at full length on the cold, wet ground all that remained of the once favored child of fortune, even Charles Barry. A rough pine coffin and a few feet of earth were his only inheritances, and clods were piled above him by strange, rude men, amid coarse jestings and blasphemy. *Such is "the wages of sin."*

* * * * *

Ten years—listen! Ten years! ten years! ten years! Ah, how plainly the great bells of the Garden City say "ten years!" as they ring out a joyous welcome to another glad new year. Ten years had been gathered into the garner of the Almighty to be sorted, the tares

from the wheat, and ten had been added to the score of ages by the Grim Recorder.

“Ten years!” oh, yes, and a generous, noble old man, even Judge Dudley, had peacefully departed to a higher and better life, but the Palace of the Avenue was brilliantly lighted that joyous New-Year’s eve, and a throng of beautiful children sported through the spacious parlors, while in the dining-hall papas and mammas lingered over their wine, amid smiles and mutual congratulations.

Hark! hear the bells chime! How plainly they say ten years! Ha-ha! how the children romp—ha-ha! and, bursting open the door, rush in, a veritable army of invasion, capturing papas and mammas, and coming to the relief of our good friend Lec Cassell, who, flushed with “the rosy,” had risen to respond to a toast, proposed by our jolly friend Merryfellow, in these words:

“Edward, Kate and three babies,
Leo, Grace and their four,
Rudolph and Dollie’s houseful,
May another ten years bring us more.”

Cassell had been unable to frame a single neat sentence, and stood leaning over the back of his chair, laughing and protesting that the toast itself entirely exhausted the subject, but he heartily concurred in the sentiments expressed, and were it not for the slight annoyances incident to occasional domestic midnight concerts, necessitating a “tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching,” he certainly could desire no greater happiness. But just there the children put in an appearance, spoiling the speech, and, amid the tooting of tin horns, the rattle of drums and the squeaking of cry-

ing dolls, Cassell's voice was completely drowned, and the meeting came to a sudden and untimely end.

Since then many happy New-Years have come and gone, and our friends are growing old, but they are happy, and true to each other, and the great Father of all has blessed them abundantly.

THE END.

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